

**CHRISTIAN TAI CHI MEDITATION: CULTIVATING
AWARENESS OF GOD IN ALL THINGS THROUGH
IGNATIAN AND TAOIST PRACTICES**

A Professional Project

Presented to

the Faculty of the

School of Theology at Claremont

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Ministry

by

Joseph Phuc Le

May 1995

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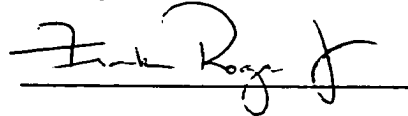
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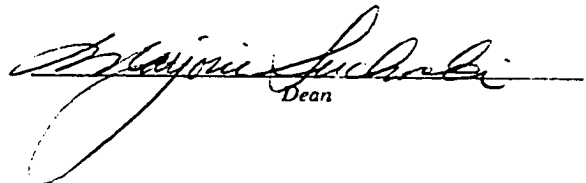
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

Faculty Committee



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Abstract

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Christians experience, through prayer, the peace and joy that only God can give. Prayer gives strength and hope to live through daily struggles. Prayer is an important dimension of both Eastern and Western religions. However, people within Western and Eastern traditions are unaware of or do not understand each other's ways of obtaining inner peace. Two rich forms of prayer that have been largely unknown apart from their respective traditions are Ignatian prayer practices and Taoist prayer practices. Most Christians from the West are unaware of Taoist practices, and most Taoists from the East are unaware of Ignatian prayers. This project builds a bridge that connects these two streams so that Eastern and Western people can come to know and love one another more for the holistic well-being of humanity. The result is a healing resource for the attainment of inner peace and harmony and for the work of reducing violence and hatred in the world. Christians can benefit from an integration of Taoist practices and Ignatian prayers, enabling them to experience God's love more easily and more completely. The integration provides Christians with a very powerful tool for the attainment of inner peace and spiritual growth.

This project discusses Taoist and Ignatian forms of spirituality and integrates them at the level of both theory and practice. The study demonstrates how, while neither

tradition is deficient in its own right, each can compliment the other and enlarge the whole spiritual experience for Christians--to be whole, and to be complete in body, mind and spirit.

A model for this integration of Ignatian prayer practices and Taoist meditation practices is "Awareness of God in all things." This model becomes useful for Christians in retreats and in Christian Tai Chi meditation classes for individuals and for groups. "Awareness of God in all things" is to love and praise God in all things. "Awareness of God in all things" can help us to become more mindful of God's love for us. By this practice, we become more aware of God's presence and love in all things. In turn we can respond to God's love more effectively. We come to love and serve one another for the love of God. We become more aware of the God of love whom we live for. We offer in loving service to others in all things, for the greater glory of God.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this project in memory of my parents who taught me how to love and serve God in all things.

Chapter 1

Introduction

You are like light for the whole world. . . . Your light must shine before people, so that they will see the good things you do and praise your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5: 14-16)

Prayer is an important dimension of both Eastern and Western religions. However, people within Western and Eastern traditions are often unaware of, or do not understand, each other's ways of obtaining inner peace. For example, most Christians from the West are unaware of Taoist theory and its practices; most Taoists from the East are unaware of Ignatian spirituality and its exercises. Both Taoist practices and Ignatian exercises can be rich resources for Christians who pray. Furthermore, their use in conjunction with one another can provide Christians with a very powerful tool for the attainment of inner peace and spiritual growth.

As Christians, we are still yearning for direction in our lives.¹ We may have been baptized as Christians, or initiated as Taoists, but we do not live close to God and do not love one another as we ought. We remain attached to material things and suffer because of our attachments. Materialism, individualism, and the drive for achievement within our cultural contexts lead us to seek power, prestige and pleasure. When we lose our power and prestige, we become upset. When we age, we become afraid of death. When we seek only pleasure, we become spiritually, emotionally and physically ill. The more attached we are to our possessions, the more worried and nervous we become, the less time we have for prayer, and for being with God intentionally. As long as we remain driven by these

¹ In this project, I use "we" to indicate Catholics and other Christians who are attracted to and follow Ignatian spirituality.

passions or are inordinately attached to our possessions and are not cognizant of the Giver of life's gifts, we are unable to attain inner peace.

In my experience, Ignatian spiritual exercises and Taoist theory and practices offer rich resources for this struggle. Ignatian spiritual exercises come from Saint Ignatius of Loyola who created a series of spiritual exercises in the sixteenth century. These exercises involve methods of praying. Ignatian prayers can help Christians to build a deep relationship with God. We can calm our drives and focus our attachments in God. Ignatian prayers can also help us to find God's love and presence in all activities.

Practices such as acupuncture, acupressure, Kung-Fu, Chi Kung and Tai Chi come from Taoism which emphasizes the theory and dynamics of Yin and Yang. Yin can be expressed in many ways such as black, negative, soft, female, moon, while Yang can be expressed as white, positive, hard, male, sun, etc. They complement each other in order to keep harmony and order in the universe. For my project, I discuss only the Taoist practices of Chi Kung and Tai Chi.

Taoist theory and practices have been in existence for over four thousand years and Ignatian spiritual exercises have been in existence for over four hundred years. The endurance alone of these two forms of spiritual practice recommends them as having value for the holistic well-being of humanity. Ignatian spiritual exercises focus on Jesus as the center for Christians. In the Gospel of John, Jesus is "the way, the truth and the life" (Jn 14:6), and through Jesus, Christians experience God unconditional and infinite love. With this foundation of God's unconditional love, Christians experience a basic desire, in turn, to love, to respect and to serve God, as well as one another. This building up of love,

respect and service for one another can lessen violence and hatred in the world. Ignatian practices nurture this love. God's love for humanity is a fundamental belief for Christians. Peace can be derived from this belief that God loves us unconditionally. This peace comes from maintaining a deep relationship with our God, when we are able to experience God's care and presence in ordinary life. We gain peace when we find the meaning of our lives in God. Then without fear, we can devote our lives to love, to glorify God, and to worship God above anything else.

In addition, Ignatian practices help us gain direction for our lives. Saint Paul indicates that the ultimate goal of Christians is to glorify God in all of their thoughts and actions (Col 3:17). Our ultimate life goal is to love, to praise and to glorify God. This ultimate goal is the final spiritual destination for us. Ignatian spiritual exercises help us in the "discernment of spirits" which makes this goal possible. Discernment of spirits is an exercise designed to determine whether one's actions or decisions are being led by the Spirit of God or by an evil spirit. The fruit of the Spirit of God is peace and joy, while the fruit of the evil spirit is confusion, sadness and misery.

Taoist practices such as Chi-Kung and Tai-Chi are convenient exercises which people of any age, male and female, can practice anywhere and any time. Chi Kung and Tai Chi are practices to develop the inner energy in order to have a healthy body, mind and spirit. Chi Kung often involves stationary exercises, while Tai Chi involves graceful movements.

The practice of such exercises helps practitioners become aware of all things--their body, their breath, their thoughts, their feelings. Taoist theory posits close internal

relationships among the body, the mind and the emotions. In Taoist thinking the mind influences attitudes, and attitudes shape and determine behavior. Therefore, training the mind is crucial in Taoist practices. By constantly using their minds to be aware of feelings and thoughts, practitioners can be healed spiritually, emotionally and physically. Taoists focus on understanding themselves; by emphasizing self-understanding, practitioners can be compassionate toward others' feelings, too. In addition, Taoists are aware that all things are forever changing. Often this awareness is likened to a flow of a river. By perceiving life in such a way, Taoists can let go of all inordinate attachments, including power, prestige and pleasure, in order to obtain an inner peace.

Tai-Chi practitioners develop the calm mind and peaceful feelings that are necessary conditions for solving problems. In addition, by practicing Tai-Chi, practitioners can gain good health. This good health is a fundamental condition for all human activities. So, Tai-Chi exercise is an art for health.

In general, Ignatian prayer practices and Taoist theory and practices bring many benefits for the holistic well-being of humanity. As a Christian, grounded in God's unconditional love, I am committed to love and serve God and peoples of all nations. As a Taoist practitioner for ten years, I find it necessary to systematically connect my interests and talents in Taoist practices with my commitment to God in prayers. I am, therefore, interested in exploring the compatibility between the philosophy of Taoism and that of Ignatian spirituality.

By focusing on Ignatian prayer exercises and Taoist meditation practices, I intend to demonstrate the complementarity of the two traditions and the way in which, when used

together, they encompass even greater wholeness and holistic well-being for the glory of God. I intentionally use the word “compliment” as opposed to “complement” because neither tradition needs the other for providing adequate spiritual life. Each tradition is complete in itself. In addition, the notion of paying mutual respect as conveyed in the term “compliment” is appropriate. I believe that this project can help both Eastern and Western people to know and to love one another more fully for the peace of the world and for the holistic well-being of humanity. I have learned many methods of praying in Ignatian spiritual exercises. I have made a thirty-day silent retreat. I make an annual eight-day retreat and I pray daily. I have directed retreats for several Roman Catholic groups, and I often lead prayer groups. I have also been trained in Taoist meditation practices; I have practiced Tai Chi and Chi Kung for ten years; and I have taught Taoist meditation practices for groups and individuals.

The longer I practice Ignatian prayer practices and Taoist meditation practices, the more I discover that there are many benefits to be derived from these two streams. One benefit, Taoist practices provide the solitude for Ignatian prayer practices. Another benefit, Taoist practices train Christians to relax so that they can open and trust in God’s love more. On the other hand, Ignatian prayer practices provide Christians a significant way to love God. Ignatian prayer practices provide Christians a way to find God in all things, a way to love and serve others in all things. So Taoist practices and Ignatian prayer practices compliment each other. These two streams enable Christians to experience God’s love more easily and to love God more deeply. The result is a healing

resource for the attainment of inner peace and harmony and for the work of reducing violence and hatred in the world while empowering love for one another.

My thesis is that Ignatian prayer and Taoist meditation compliment each other, neither being inherently deficient nor lacking in its own right, but together forming a larger congenial spiritual wholeness for the greater glory of God. This wholeness entails Ignatian spirituality, theology, meditation and contemplation and Taoist meditation, philosophy, and healing exercises.

This project focuses on Taoist theory and practices with Ignatian prayer practices. Specifically, this project discusses the relationship of Chi-Kung and Tai-Chi practices to Ignatian prayer practices.² The project will not explore the numerous varieties of other spiritual practices from the West or East.

A primary method to be used in this project is praxis reflection. I will discuss Taoist thoughts and the theological dimensions of Ignatian prayers and integrate them at the level both of theory and of practice, demonstrating how, while neither tradition is deficient in its own right, each can compliment the other and enlarge the whole spiritual experience for Christians.

The project is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 has introduced the thesis and argument for this project. It has described the relevance of Ignatian prayer practices and Taoist practices. The purpose of this chapter is to show the importance of my thesis and interests.

² I am aware that all translations of Ignatian spirituality and Taoist practices are fraught with sexist language. I have made an effort to use inclusive language in my work, and I have done so except where quoting from other works.

Chapter 2 discusses Ignatian prayer practices and how their underlying theology and theory relate to Ignatian spiritual exercises. Ignatius' understanding of Christians' ultimate life goal is to love God and to glorify God. Christians can find God in all activities such as working, playing, walking, seeing, resting. Especially, Ignatian theology focuses on Jesus as the center of Christian lives. Christians come to know Jesus, love him and imitate him as a model for Christian lives. The Ignatian spiritual exercises involve meditation and contemplation, verbal prayers and non-verbal prayers. These exercises are designed to nurture the goal of finding God in all things and giving glory to God. Ignatian spirituality can be applied in Ignatian retreats by offering ways to pray in order to meet Jesus, by offering ways to deepen Christian lives and to improve spiritual health.

Chapter 3 explores Taoism and how its underlying theory relates to its practices. The Yin and Yang principle is based on Taoist philosophy. According to Taoist philosophy, if one part of this principle were eliminated, life would cease to exist. Again, Chi-Kung and Tai-Chi are Taoist practices. This chapter articulates the physical and mental aspects of Chi-Kung and Tai-Chi. Indeed, training one's mind for being aware of all things is a crucial exercise in practicing Chi-Kung and Tai-Chi. So, constantly being aware of one's feelings and thoughts, a practitioner can be healed spiritually, emotionally and physically.

Chapter 4 shows Ignatian prayer practices and Taoist practices complimenting each other for the greater glory of God. It shows how Christians can learn from these two streams of thought and practice to realize the unique teaching of each stream, and to recognize how the two streams compliment each other, creating together a larger whole of

healing spiritual experience. For example, Ignatian spiritual exercises emphasize divine love and grace, while Taoist practices of Chi-Kung and Tai-Chi highlight human effort. My point of view is that Christians need both divine love and grace and human effort for effective prayer and spiritual growth. The integration takes place at the level of both theory and practice. Especially, I will emphasize that Taoist practices can provide a healthy body, mind and spirit so that one can be whole in one's spiritual experience.

Finally, Chapter 5 provides a model that enables Christians to use Taoist practices to compliment Ignatian prayer exercises and thus enlarge and enhance their spiritual experience. I describe how this model becomes useful for Christians in silent retreats and meditation classes for individuals and for groups, and demonstrate that, while neither tradition is deficient, the two complimentary traditions create a larger whole. I report in this chapter the personal journals of participants in a retreat in which my model was employed. Then I draw integrating conclusions regarding the complementarity and mutually enhancing effectiveness of Taoist practices and Ignatian prayer exercises used together in my retreat model. It is my hope that Christians will discover the rich resources within both Ignatian prayer practices and Taoist meditation exercises. It is my further hope that this discovery will lead to the greater glory of God in our lives and in God's world.

Chapter 2

Ignatian Prayer in Theory and Practice

I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will have the light of life and will never walk in darkness. (John 8:12)

Christian Prayer

Christian prayer is a personal encounter with a personal God, an opening of the mind and heart to God. It is a union with God in thought and desire. Prayer is living in relationship with God whom we love. Thus, prayer is as “a love relationship with God,”¹ exemplified by Mary as she pondered all things that God had given her in her heart (Lk 2:19). Prayer is described as an art of “life with the living God.”²

Prayer helps us to live life fully with the awareness of God’s presence, and in union with God, at every moment of life. Prayer is also a powerful source of healing. Through prayer, we may obtain our peace and shalom or wholeness. We are invited to pray so that we may not lose heart (Lk 18:1). According to Luigi Faccenda, a Franciscan priest who taught prayer for fifty years, humans are spiritual creatures and by prayer we can better serve others.³ Without prayer, we cut off ourselves from God, the Fountain of faith, love, hope, goodness, truth and beauty. Thus, the role of prayer is very significant for Christians. In order to be a true Christian, one must pray.

¹ Thomas H. Green, Opening to God (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1977), 38.

² John Wright, “Prayer,” in The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality, ed. Michael Downey (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1993), 775.

³ Luigi Faccenda, Contemplation and Action (West Covina, Calif.: Immaculate Press, 1991), 8.

Prayer takes many forms. In Catholic rosary prayer groups, people recite the words of the prayers together in the same tone. In private prayers, each person has one's own way to reach God and each has one's own personal touch with God. Some use prayer books. Some think of God's words and apply them to their lives. Thus, different methods of prayer have been developed throughout the history of Christian prayer.

There are various kinds of prayer. Thomas Green has identified four types of verbal prayer: adoration, contrition, thanksgiving and petition.⁴ These forms of prayer are familiar to most Christians. According to the theologian John Wright, meditation and contemplation, though non-verbal, are also forms of prayer.⁵ Meditation is kataphatic prayer which uses images and words of Scripture. "Scripture Prayer" and "Ignatian Contemplation of Scripture," which will be described below, are examples of this. Contemplation is apophatic prayer which emphasizes silence, the absence of images and words, one's heart opening in the presence of God, and pure presence between self and God. "Centering Prayer" is an example of this contemplation.⁶ Each of these has a long history of practice within the Christian tradition. However, they are less commonly practiced. To introduce them more fully, and to show how Ignatius incorporated these forms of prayer, I will describe some forms of meditation and contemplation in the section of "Finding God in Personal Prayer" in this chapter.

⁴ Green, Opening to God, 24-25.

⁵ Wright, 774.

⁶ Wilkie Au, By Way of the Heart (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 85-113. In these pages, this psychologist explains many methods of prayer. For example, "Praying with Our Senses," "Praying with Our Breath," "Mantric Prayer," etc.

Thus, Christian prayer takes many forms; however, the heart of prayer is faith. Christians need to have an attitude of faith in any kind of prayer mentioned above. In his book, Sadhana, Anthony De Mello tells a story of the boy and the Hindu Mystic Ramakrishna:

Daily the poor boy went to school in early morning and returned home late at night. The problem was that he had to pass the jungle every day. He was frightened and asked his widowed mother to give him a servant who would accompany him. The mother said, "Son, we are too poor to afford a servant. Tell your Brother Krishna to accompany you to and from school. He is the Lord of the Jungle. He will surely come with you if you ask him to." The next day, the boy called out to his Brother Krishna. Krishna appeared and agreed to the boy's request.

Then, on the day of the boy's teacher's birthday, every student was expected to bring gifts for this schoolmaster. The widow told her son, "We are too poor, son, to afford a gift for your master. Ask your Brother Krishna to give you a gift for him." Krishna gave the boy a jug full of milk which the boy was proudly to show his master and classmates. When the master poured the milk into a vessel, he noticed that the jug was full of milk again. To the master's surprise, he asked the boy where he got that jug of milk. "Brother Krishna gave it to me," answered the boy. "Brother Krishna? Who is he?" "He is the Lord of the Jungle," said the boy. "He accompanies me to and from school each day." The master said with his doubt, "We'd like to see this Krishna you speak of. Take us to him."

So, the boy marched back to the jungle with a group of his friends and master. He called out Krishna many times, but there was no reply. Finally, the boy cried out with his tears, "Brother Krishna, please come. If you do not come they will say I am a liar. They won't believe me." Then, there was a silent moment, and the boy heard clearly the voice of Krishna saying to him: "Son, I cannot come. The day your master has your purity of heart and your simple childlike faith, I shall come."⁷

The boy in this story believed Krishna appeared to help him. Likewise, trusting in God is the key to prayer, "for nothing is impossible with God" (Lk 1:37). We rely on God's power like the clay relies on the hand of the potter (Jer 18:6). St. Paul says, "In

⁷ Anthony De Mello, Sadhana, A Way to God (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1979), 77-78.

him who is the source of my strength I have strength for everything” (Phil 4:13). So, Ignatius advised us to let God govern our lives; otherwise, what we try to do can be in vain (Eccl 1: 14). Furthermore, Ignatius says, “Satisfying God is much more important than satisfying men. But it is not all that necessary to wear yourself out with fatigue; just put forth an honest effort and leave the rest to Him, who can do whatever he pleases.”⁸

From Christian prayer in general, I would like to specifically discuss Ignatian prayer. Ignatian prayer is one school, or approach, to Christian prayer. It originated from Saint Ignatius of Loyola. So, the key to understanding Ignatian prayer is to understand the character of the mystic, Ignatius of Loyola.

Ignatius of Loyola

Ignatius’ Life

Ignatius lived in the sixteenth century. During this century, which was characterized by the development of reason, explanation and logic, the history of Christian spirituality revealed three great Spanish spiritual persons: Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), Teresa of Avila (1515-1582), and John of The Cross (1542-1591).⁹

Ignatius was born in 1491, in the Spanish Basque country, to a family of five sisters and twelve brothers. Ignatius had great skills with the sword, horse riding and was known for having affairs with women. He was involved in the military until his right leg was wounded at Pamplona in 1521. Lying in bed, he read and reflected on The Life of

⁸ Joseph N. Tylenda, comp., Prayerful Thoughts from St. Ignatius of Loyola (Baltimore: Jesuit Seminary and Mission Bureau, 1984), 14.

⁹ Urban Holmes, A History of Christian Spirituality (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980), 93.

Christ, by Ludolph of Saxony (a fourteenth-century Cartesian),¹⁰ and a collection of lives of the saints. He found peace and joy in these books. As a result, he had a profound conversion in his life. Ignatius committed himself to God, choosing God as his ultimate goal. He still dreamed of glory, but not for himself; it was to be God's glory. He sought to glorify God in all things.

After recovering from his leg injury, Ignatius hung his sword in the Lady Chapel at Montserrat, Spain. Then he went to an isolated cave in Manresa, Spain for ten months of intensive prayer. There, he fasted for penance and prayed for long hours.¹¹ Ignatius found a profound peace and joy at the Cardoner river, Manresa. Early in his life of seeking, about age 33, Ignatius was given by God the ultimate experience of enlightenment. With the peace of God and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Ignatius formed the foundation for his book, Spiritual Exercises. Later in his life, the aged Ignatius reflected on this peak experience.

As he sat [at the road next to the Cardoner river], the eyes of his understanding began to open; not that he saw a vision, but [he came] to understand and know many things, matters spiritual and those pertaining to faith and learning. This took place with such great clarity that everything appeared to him to be something new. And it happened to enlighten his understanding in such a manner that he thought of himself as if he were another man and that he had an intellect different from the one he had before. He cannot expound in detail what he then understood, for they were many things, but he can state that he received such a lucidity in understanding that during the course of his entire life--now having passed his 62nd year--if he were to gather all the help he received from God and everything he knew and add them together, he does not think they would add up to all that he received on that one occasion.¹²

¹⁰ Philip Sheldrake, "Imagination and Prayer," The Way: Supplement, April 1984, 95.

¹¹ Mark Link, Challenge 2000 (Allen, Tex.: Tabor Publishing, 1993), 12-13.

¹² Harvey D. Egan, An Anthology of Christian Mysticism (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1991), 428.

After his long retreat, he decided to go to the Holy Land, but the provincial of Franciscans did not allow Ignatius to stay. So, he chose to go to the University of Paris to earn a Master of Arts degree. In Paris, he gathered together a group of men (among them, St. Francis Xavier). This group later founded the Society of Jesus (commonly known as the Jesuits).

After his graduation, he and his friends went to Rome to submit themselves to the pope for the purpose of serving the poor and sick. Meanwhile, at the Chapel of La Storta, it was revealed to Ignatius that Jesus invited him to follow Jesus' campaign for the salvation of humanity. He had a vision that God supported him through Jesus to establish the Society of Jesus. Finally, Pope Paul III approved Ignatius to establish the Society of Jesus in 1541. Later, Pope Pius IX also approved Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises for retreat work. On July 31, 1556 Ignatius uttered "O my God!" and died. Immediately, the news of his death spread on the streets of Rome. People cried out that the saint had died. In 1622, Ignatius was proclaimed a saint by Pope Gregory XII.¹³

Ignatius' Works

Harvey Egan, a theologian, concludes:

"To be with the Trinitarian Christ to serve" may well sum up Ignatian mysticism. His profound Trinitarian, Christ-centered, Eucharistic, priestly, and "hyperpapal" mysticism enabled Ignatius to find God in all things and all things in God. A master of the discernment of spirits, he has been called the mystic of moods and thoughts.¹⁴

¹³ Jacqueline Syrup Bergan and Marie Schwan, Praying with Ignatius of Loyola (Winona, Minn.: Saint Mary's Press, 1991), 13.

¹⁴ Egan, Anthology of Christian Mysticism, 421.

Because of the Ignatian union of presence and service, he remains an example of interior life, and of contemplation for ministry, especially the ministry for the poor and the sick.

Ignatius completed two great books, The Jesuit Constitutions and Spiritual Exercises. The Jesuit Constitutions is the primary rule of the Jesuits. It describes Jesuit members as pilgrims who may be sent anywhere for all kinds of ministry: retreat, education, missionaries. This book also says that Jesuits do away with monastic rules. It has been revised through time, but the fundamental issues have been kept the same. The Spiritual Exercises was composed at Manresa, as mentioned above. It is a directory guiding people making retreats. The main purpose for which Ignatius wrote this book was to guide himself and others to love and to glorify God. This glorification is mediated primarily through two means, prayer and “discernment of spirits.” First, this book contains Ignatius’ notes to guide others to a closer union with God, to sharpen their awareness of God’s presence. It guides others to be open to experience God’s love. Second, this book contains the rules of “discernment of spirits” which guide others to come to some kind of vocational decision in relationship with God, to live in harmony with God’s will.

Spiritual Exercises is the foundation of Jesuit spirituality. “Spiritual exercises” means all of the possible ways to experience God, to love and to glorify God including such practices as meditation, contemplation, verbal and non-verbal prayers. Like physical exercises such as walking, jogging, and swimming, which can provide us with a healthy body, spiritual exercises can provide us with a healthy mind and heart in order to open up

to God, to trust in God (Exercise #1).¹⁵ Though they can be used as private devotional material, spiritual exercises are often used for retreats. Retreats can take various forms. Two examples are directed retreats and conference retreats. Ignatius focused on the directed retreat. In the directed retreat, the retreatant commits to spending a substantial period of time, from five days to thirty days, at a retreat center. There, silence is required for a retreatant so that one can listen to God for the purpose of having a deep union with God and making decisions with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.¹⁶ The directed retreat deals with one retreatant and one director, on a one-to-one relationship.¹⁷ Actually, a directed retreat involves a retreatant, a director and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit guides the two of them while they work together in retreat.¹⁸ The director gives daily guidance to a retreatant. The retreatant needs the guidance of one's director since one does not rely only on oneself for guidance, but the retreatant also depends on the Church and other Christians to understand the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Finally, the retreatant and the director normally meet once a day.¹⁹

¹⁵ Ignatius of Loyola, The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, trans. Louis J. Puhl (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1951), 1. Exercises from Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises will hereafter be referred to by the numbers as they are commonly known. Translations for these exercises (in Chap. 2) are from Louis J. Puhl. Also used is David L. Fleming's translation from his book, Modern Spiritual Exercises (Garden City, N. Y.: Image Books, 1978).

¹⁶ In the directed retreat, a retreatant needs to be alone, to be silent, and to pray. Retreat can help one be close to God and to love God. Retreat can also help one in making decisions which can be found in Ignatius' "Discernment of Spirits."

¹⁷ Herbert F. Smith, "The Nature and Value of a Directed Retreat," in Notes on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola, ed. David L. Fleming (St. Louis: Review for Religious, 1983), 21.

¹⁸ Smith, 21.

¹⁹ Smith, 23.

On the other hand, the conference retreat consists of several presentations in a day. The speaker can focus on one theme for a large group. Silence is usually not necessary for this retreat since it can involve discussion among retreatants.

Ignatius structured his spiritual exercises around four weeks. Ignatius reminds us that four weeks are not divided necessarily by chronological time but depend on the stage of development of the retreatants who make a retreat.²⁰ For example, the first week for retreatants can be seven days, but the second week can be nine days, or vice versa. Thus, four weeks can last over one month or over an eight day retreat. Each exercise is one hour of prayer. Each day one has five exercises to pray. Typically, the first exercise and the second exercise for a day give new matters (Luke 19:1-10 and John 11:38-44); the third and fourth exercises are for repetition. One can use a repetition method since repetition can sink one deeper into one's heart. The fifth exercise is an application of senses.²¹ One can use a method of an application of senses (sound, smell, sight, taste, touch) in order to open one's heart, and to let go of the activity of the mind. Senses can be projected in the story of Jesus' raising Lazarus (Jn 11:38-44). In this story, one can ask: What do I see around Lazarus' tomb? How do I feel about the sound of the stone which has been taken away? How does Lazarus' body smell? When I untie Lazarus how do I feel about touching him?

²⁰ Ignatius, The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, trans. Anthony Mottola (New York: Doubleday, Image, 1989), 14.

²¹ Maryland Province of the Society of Jesus, Place Me with Your Son (Baltimore: Georgetown University Press, 1986), xviii.

The aim for the first week is to arouse the contrition and the sorrow of retreatants, to enable them to reflect on their sins, to enable them to see how they have failed to move toward their final end. Ignatius, for this week, uses meditations on Adam and Eve, the angels, (human) personal sins, death and hell in order to help retreatants to purify their soul and put their life in order with God.

The aim for the second week is to know Jesus, to love Jesus more and to imitate him. Ignatius, during this week, creates meditations on “Christ the King and His call” (Exercises #91-#98), on “Two Standards,” on “Three Classes of Men,” and on “Three Modes of Humility.” “Christ the King and His Call” is about Jesus inviting us to join him in suffering, as well as sharing with him in glory (Exercise #95). Jesus invites us to live humbly and poorly like him in order to bring salvation to all people.

“Two Standards” is about Jesus’ plan and Satan’s plan for the world. Ignatius says that we must make a choice between Satan and Jesus Christ. Satan’s plan is to try to confuse and isolate us from God by bringing us a desire for possessions, a desire for being “somebody,” and a desire for self-identification with what we possess; in short, a desire for riches, honor and pride. For example, it will not hurt anyone or anything if I have an expensive house, my own airplane, and take my vacation in Hawaii every year. But I can lose myself more and more in such things, and then pretty soon I will not hesitate to accept “the glory of the world.”²² On the other hand, Christ’s plan is to call us to poverty as opposed to riches; insults as opposed to the honor of the world; humility as opposed to

²² Karl Rahner, Spiritual Exercises, trans. Kenneth Baker (New York: Herder & Herder, 1965), 175-78.

pride. From these three steps, Christ leads us to all other virtues.²³ Indeed, Christ's goal is to free us from attachment to worldly things so that we can unify ourselves with God and glorify God alone.²⁴

Finally, from the "Two Standards" the retreatant can meditate on "Three Classes of Men" which is a meditation on how one is free to follow Jesus. The retreatant can also meditate on "Three Modes of Humility" which is a meditation on how much one loves Jesus and is willing to do everything for Jesus.²⁵

The aim of the third week is to help retreatants to be generous in following Jesus. They meditate on the passion of Jesus in order to be compassionate with his suffering. Jesus' suffering is for their salvation. In response to Jesus' love for them, they ask for the will to follow him, to suffer with him. They desire to carry their own cross. "Anyone who does not take up his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple" (Lk 14: 27).

Finally, the aim of the fourth week is to meditate on the joy of Jesus Christ in his resurrection. Jesus' resurrection brings hope, joy, and love to the world. "I tell you all this that in me you may find peace. You will suffer in the world. But take courage! I have overcome the world" (Jn 16: 33). Retreatants finish their fourth week with a desire to glorify God, and to find God in all things (Exercises #230-#237).

²³ Rahner, Spiritual Exercises, 176.

²⁴ Link, 155.

²⁵ Ignatius, Spiritual Exercises, trans. by Mottola, 15.

Glorifying God

Ignatius spent over thirty years loving God and glorifying God. One of the significant prayers of Ignatius is the “First Principle and Foundation” (Exercise #23). At the beginning of this prayer, Ignatius says, “Man is created to *praise, reverence, and serve God* our Lord, and by this means to save his soul” (emphasis mine). It means that “God freely created us so that we might know, love, and serve him in this life and be happy with him forever.”²⁶ This prayer means our Christian goal--the only end or destination-- is to live with God forever, to love and to glorify God (Mk 12:30). Karl Rahner remarks that people understand themselves as meaningful when they experience God filling up their emptiness.²⁷ Likewise, St. Augustine says, “Our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee.”²⁸ And St. Paul says, “Whatever we eat, drink or do, do all for the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31). Especially, Ignatius advises, “Set your own will entirely aside. . . . and strive to keep before your eyes one and only goal, that is, the *greater service and glory of God*”²⁹ (emphasis mine). Ignatius keeps his eyes on the Giver, not on the gifts, and thus Ignatius desires to do much more for the “greater glory of God.” In the same way, Christians should keep their eyes on God as in the following story about a young man and an Indian king.

The king announced an examination to select an excellent man to be his advisor. The king’s decree was that whoever could carry a full tank of water from

²⁶ Fleming, 25.

²⁷ Cited in John English, Spiritual Freedom (Guelph, Ontario: Loyola House, 1973), 137.

²⁸ Confession of St. Augustine, bk. 1, chap. 1, trans. Frank Sheed (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1943), 3 as quoted in Green, Opening to God, 26.

²⁹ Quoted in Tylanda, 20.

the Indian river to the king's palace without stopping would be rewarded greatly. Over one thousand men attended this occasion. Just at the time they started to run with the full tanks, they saw a lot of gold on the road. Automatically, two hundred men dropped their tanks to pick up the gold. Then running for a short distance, the remaining young men saw many beautiful girls who were without modest clothes. These girls seduced them. Thus, some hundred more dropped their tanks and became attached to these girls. The remaining continued to run for a distance where they saw and heard a master of magic who was sitting on the road. This master proclaimed that whoever followed him, that person could do a lot of magic things such as flying in the sky and making things become gold. As a result, all remaining followed him, except for one young man who carried his tank to the king's palace without stopping anywhere. The king contentedly asked him how could he not become attached to those temptations on the road. The young man answered that he only *focused on his aim* (emphasis mine). His whole being (body, mind, spirit, heart) only pointed to the king's palace. Thus, he ran straight forward to the palace without stopping.³⁰

Likewise, to focus on God alone, Psalm 34:1 says beautifully, "I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth." We will now explore two dimensions of glorifying God: first, its root in God's love for us, and second, the inner impulse that inspires us to give glory to God.

God Loves Us

Before we can focus our lives on God alone, however, we must experience how deeply God loves us. The basic trust for Christians is that God loves us unconditionally and nothing else matters. Thomas Merton says, "The root of Christian love is not the will to love, but the faith that one is loved. The faith that one is loved by God."³¹

Scriptures show that God loves us first. "This is what love is: It is not that we have loved God, but that God loved us and sent the Son to be the means by which our sins are forgiven" (1 Jn 4:10), and "Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear

³⁰ Darshani Deane, Minh Triet Trong Doi Song [Wisdom, bliss, and common sense], trans. Phong Nguyen (Westminster, Calif.: Van Nghe, 1992), 228-29.

³¹ Thomas Merton, New Seeds of Contemplation (New York: New Directions, 1961), 75.

my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me” (Rev 3:20). God shows God’s love especially through Jesus, “Yes, God so loved the world that He gave his only Son” (Jn 3:16). God’s son is sent to save us, to guide us so that we do not get lost on the way “home to God.” Scripture shows that the whole of God’s plan for us is to share all gifts to give glory and thanks to God. We are not manipulated by God. In this sense, our dignity is unique since God loves us: “You are precious in my eyes and glorious, and. . . . I love you” (Is 43:4,); and “Do not be afraid. I will save you. I have called you by name: You are mine” (Is 43:1); also “The mountains and hills may crumble, but my love for you will never end; I will keep forever my promise of peace. So says the Lord who loves you” (Is 54:10). Furthermore, we can experience God’s love for us in Hosea 11, Isaiah 49, Ephesians 1 and 3, John 3 and 10:10, Psalm 8, etc. God’s love is like the flow of a river. God never stops loving--nothing in all of creation can ever separate us from the love of God (Rm 8:39). Finally, God loves us and wants to be present with us until the end of the earth (Mt 28:20).

God loves us and accepts us as we are. Peter Van Breemen, the author of As Bread That is Broken writes, “Every human being craves to be accepted, accepted for what he is. . . .When a person is appreciated for what he does, he is not unique, someone else can do the same work perhaps even better than he. But when a person is loved for what he is, then he becomes a unique and irreplaceable personality. . . . I am accepted by God as I am--as *I am*, and not as I should be.”³² God’s love for us is independent of whatever we do, unlike what we often experience from others who reward us when we do

³² Peter G. Van Breemen, As Bread That is Broken (Denville, N. J.: Dimension Books, 1974), 10-12.

good and punish us when we do bad. God accepts us so that we can accept ourselves as we are. We can respect ourselves as Scriptures advises, “[My child,] keep your self-respect, but remain modest. Value yourself at your true worth. There is no excuse for a person to run himself down. No one respects a person who has no respect for himself” (Sir 10:28-29).

Through prayer, I can come to realize that God loves me and God accepts me as I am. By praying continuously, “This is my beloved son. My favor rests on him” (Mt 3:17), I can believe that God speaks to each of us in the same way, “You are my beloved daughter/son. My favor rests on you.”

According to Ignatius, God’s love is manifested much more through God’s *deeds* than through God’s words. This is seen for example in God’s act of creation and presenting creation with gifts and talents (God’s gifts to me, Exercise #234).

God dwells in creatures; in the elements giving them existence, in the plants giving them life, in the animals conferring upon them sensation, in man bestowing understanding. So He dwells in me and gives me being, life, sensation, intelligence; and makes a temple of me, since I am created in the likeness and image of the Divine Majesty.³³

Furthermore, God does not only give gifts, but God gives God’s own son--the body and blood of Jesus Christ--to me (see, “God’s gift of himself to me,” Exercise #235). “God loves me” can also be manifested in “God’s labors for me” (Exercise #236): God’s son died on the cross to share God’s love and life for me. Finally, Ignatius poses that “God’s love shines down upon me like the light rays from the sun, or his love is poured

³³ Ignatius, Spiritual Exercises, trans. by Puhl, 102.

forth lavishly like a fountain spilling forth its waters into an unending stream,” (Exercises #237, “God as Giver and Gift”).³⁴

The Inner Impulse of Glorifying God

As I mentioned above, one reason we want to love God and glorify God is that we *believe* that *God loves us unconditionally*. We believe that God’s love is infinite and that we are precious and infinitely important to God. In turn, we want to thank and praise God for loving us.³⁵ Ignatius loved God so much because he had a profound belief that God loved him unconditionally. We desire to praise God, not only for the power of God, but for God’s compassion in saving us for our own salvation. In the same way, Ignatius says, “If anyone forgets himself and his private interests in order to serve God, he can be assured that heaven will provide for him better than he could have done for himself.”³⁶ Emphatically, we can say that God’s will for us is to love God with our whole heart and mind and strength (Mk 12:30). Ignatius says, “Prefer the glory of God above everything else. . . . Let your thoughts, words, and actions be in Him. . . . and let God’s commandments take first place over everything else that is good. This is what He desired, and this is what He commands.”³⁷ Indeed, to choose God means to choose life (Dt 30:19), to find meaning and peace for our lives. Ignatius encourages us to choose God

³⁴ Fleming, 88-89.

³⁵ English, 36.

³⁶ Quoted in Tylanda, 29.

³⁷ Quoted in Tylanda, 17.

because “the one who possesses God lacks nothing. God is the sovereign and universal Good, and in having Him we have all other things as well.”³⁸

The second reason for the inner impulse of glorifying God is that *God is forever faithful*. God is always present with us in our good times as well as our bad times. We believe that God creates all things. Thus, all things are gifts. All things are means to the only end--our ultimate goal. St. Paul also says, “All things lead to God” (Rom 8:28). In fact, all things such as honor and material goods are subject to change. Ecclesiastics confirms this: “All things are vanity” (Eccl 1:2). However, the Psalmist says God’s love is eternal (Ps 136). Ignatius says we are invited to use all gifts to glorify God, to love God: “God our Lord would have us look to the Giver and love Him more than His gift, keeping Him always before our eyes, in our hearts, and in our thoughts.”³⁹ In addition, we let go of all things which hinder our goal, to glorify God. For example, Peter and his brother Andrew had to leave their nets to follow Jesus, to listen to Jesus’ call (Mk1:18). Similarly, Ignatius advises “We must always remind ourselves that *we are pilgrims* until we arrive at our heavenly homeland, and we must not let our affections delay us at the roadside inns and lands through which we pass, otherwise we will forget our destination and lose interest in our final goal.”⁴⁰

Indeed, it is not easy to obtain our goal. It is not easy to love God with all of our heart and strength. It is risky, painful and difficult for us to love God. Ignatius warns us:

The moment you decided to use all your strength in praising, honoring, and

³⁸ Quoted in Tylanda, 19.

³⁹ Quoted in Tylanda, 4.

⁴⁰ Quoted in Tylanda, 16.

serving God our Lord, that was the moment you entered battle with the world, raised your standards against it, and made yourself ready to reject all that is exalted by embracing all that is lowly. At the same time you resolved to accept with indifference positions high or low, honor or dishonor, riches or poverty, to be loved or hated, to be appreciated or scorned--in short, the world's glory or the injuries it could inflict upon you.⁴¹

Since we choose to honor God, we have to meet the challenge of the "world's glory." To deal with this challenge, Ignatius advises us to pray constantly (Exercise #46). Daily prayer honors God and brings strength to cope with the "world's glory."

Particularly, retreatants often feel God's great and infinite love for them at the end of their retreat. As a result, they feel moved to love God, to glorify God in all things, to find God in all things.

Finding God in All Things

One significant way Ignatius used to glorify God is to find God in all things (Exercise #230). To find God in all things means to contemplate the love of God (Exercises #231-#237), to be aware that God operates in the world. That is, God "sustains all things in being, upholds their power of acting, draws them into the future, and makes of them one universe."⁴²

To elaborate, we begin to find God in all things when we begin to notice that we depend on God for our every breath. To find God in all things is to be aware of God's presence at every moment of our lives, in good times as well as in bad times. We have found God's presence in our past. We do not know what our future looks like, but we come to believe that God is present and God will be with us, for God's promise is to be

⁴¹ Quoted in Tylanda, 3

⁴² Wright, 775.

with us to the end of the earth (Mt 28:20). In response to God's love and presence, we utter "O Lord, our Lord, your greatness is seen in all the world" (Ps 8:1).

One can find God not only in great events, but also in small events. According to Ignatius, to be prayerful is to find God in all things, not only in our prayer time. We can also find God in our ordinary activities such as study, conversation, walking, seeing and tasting so that our daily duties are something performed for the honor and glory of God. For example, when students have to spend a lot of time in study, Ignatius recommends them to say a short prayer and offer their study to God.⁴³ Thus, finding God in all things happens when prayer and action meet.⁴⁴ In other words, we live so that every action is itself a prayer; we try to be aware of God's presence in every action. Rahner says that God must be sought and found in the things of our world.⁴⁵ In this world, "Our faith does not cause us to see different things, but to see things differently."⁴⁶ In addition, Brother Lawrence says that our ultimate goal is "to think often on God, by day, by night, in your business, and even in your diversions. God is always near you and with you."⁴⁷ We need to live so that our every day life becomes a hymn of praise to God. Mary lived a humble and ordinary life, but her entire being proclaimed "the greatness of the Lord" (Lk 1:46).

⁴³ William J. Young, ed. and trans. Letters of Saint Ignatius of Loyola (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1959), 240 as quoted in Bergan and Schwan, 79.

⁴⁴ "Prayer and action meet" can be found in the process of "Discernment of Spirits," discussed later in this chapter.

⁴⁵ Karl Rahner, On Prayer (New York: Paulist Press, 1958), 53.

⁴⁶ Au, 89.

⁴⁷ Quoted in Link, 360

Christians can also find God in their difficulties--their cross. In difficult times, Christians believe that God cares and supports them through family and friends. Rahner says that Jesus without his cross is not Jesus. Likewise, a Christian without a cross cannot be called a true Christian. Without accepting one's own cross, one will not share with Jesus in glory.⁴⁸

For Ignatius, there are three practices through which one can find God in all things. According to Ignatius, Christians can find God in prayer, in discernment of spirits, and in loving service to one another.

Finding God in personal prayer. In order to find God in personal prayer, we need to be quiet since God speaks to us in silence. As an example, the prophet Elijah experienced the "sound of sheer silence" of God (1 Kings 19: 11-13). We need to prepare a silence of heart to listen to God's voice. Indeed, listening to God is an art that needs much more practice. Listening to God is more important than one's thinking and talking in prayer.

In prayer, as mentioned before, we need to trust in God since only God can give us grace, and the Spirit of God is free to "breathe where it wills" (Jn 3:8). We trust in the Holy Spirit who can teach us how to pray. "The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words" (Rom 8:26).

It is even more important than faith that in our prayer, we have a loving heart with our hearts on fire; since God helps those who are sincere about helping themselves.⁴⁹ St.

⁴⁸ Rahner, Spiritual Exercises, 132.

Paul says that “If I have faith great enough to move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing” (1 Cor 13:2). In the same way, St. Teresa of Avila says, “The important thing is not to think much but to love much: do, then, whatever most arouses you to love.”⁵⁰ Similarly, St. Bonaventure mentions: “When we pray, the voice of the heart must be heard more than the proceedings from the mouth.”⁵¹

We need to pray without ceasing, “Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thes 5:16-18). Rahner emphasizes that we are to pray in everyday life, and we are to make everyday life our prayer for a deep union with God.⁵² Basically, all the techniques of Ignatius are means for us to love God and to glorify God.⁵³ “Every day set aside some time so that the soul will not be without its food and, thus, you will not be induced to complain like the one who said: ‘My heart has withered because I have forgotten to eat my bread’ (Ps 102:4).”⁵⁴

Personal prayer takes many forms. Below, I will focus specifically on meditation and contemplation. For Ignatius, meditation includes scripture prayer, Ignatian contemplation of scripture, “Examen of conscience,” “Examen of consciousness,” mantric

⁴⁹ Green, Opening to God, 56.

⁵⁰ Quoted in Green, Opening to God, 103.

⁵¹ Ronda De Sola Chervin, comp., Quotable Saints (Ann Arbor: Servant Publications, 1992), 190.

⁵² Rahner, On Prayer, 45.

⁵³ All of Ignatius’ techniques can be used for a group; however, in Spiritual Exercises Ignatius emphasized the individual prayer.

⁵⁴ Quoted in Tylanda, 12.

prayer and Eucharist. For contemplation, I will describe what has been referred to as Centering prayer.

The first form of meditation is scripture prayer (Exercises #250-251). In this kind of prayer, Christians meditate on God's words since to love God is to take delight in God's words. They do not meditate on sacred words to know them better, but they meditate on sacred words in order to know Jesus, to love him and to follow in his footsteps. Scripture prayer is a way to find God through Jesus' life, to glorify God through Jesus Christ. Christians believe that their salvation, lives and resurrection depend on Jesus. By Jesus Christ, they have been saved and delivered. Thus, in knowing Jesus they come to know themselves. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will have the light of life and will never walk in darkness" (Jn 8:12). The Gospel of John tells us that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life (Jn 14:6).

By imitating Jesus, we learn how to pray. For example, Jesus was praying when he was baptized (Lk 3:21-22). He prepared for his public mission with forty days of fasting and prayer (Lk 4:1-13). Jesus withdrew to a deserted place for prayers (Lk 5:16). Rising before dawn, Jesus left and went to a deserted place to pray (Mk 1:35). He departed to the mountain to pray and he spent the night in prayer to God (Lk 6:12).⁵⁵

To prepare for this prayer, first one reminds oneself of God's love and becomes aware of God's presence. The entire intention is to love God and to glorify God. Then one asks for the grace that is needed in this prayer time (Exercise #46). Second, the

⁵⁵ Wright, 767.

retreatant should be at ease and alert, whether sitting, kneeling, or standing (Exercise #76). Finally, while at ease in the chosen posture, the retreatant can meditate on scripture.

To meditate on scripture means to select a passage and to read it slowly and loudly so that the words of God can sink into one's heart. Then, one can repeat a phrase or a word that one feels drawn into. One can express one's feelings to God since God wants to communicate to a person through a phrase or a word that one feels drawn into. One can continue listening to God through one's feelings until the end of the prayer time, or one can use "Colloquy." This term describes an intimate conversation between the Father and the one praying, between Jesus and the one praying, and between Mary (or a saint) and the one praying (Exercise #63).

The scripture prayer method is used to contemplate the meaning and consolation of each word, or each phrase, or each sentence in a message of scripture, for example, the "Our Father" or the Psalms. One should not hurry to move on if a particular word catches one's attention. One should stay with the word and ponder upon what God might want to communicate. One should repeat the word until it is no longer interesting. Rev. Armand Nigro, Professor of Theology at Gonzaga University (Washington), follows this method of Ignatius' and suggests five "P's" to pray as follows.

First, the prayer picks up a *passage* from the Scriptures; chooses a *place* to be alone with God; relaxes and is alert to one's *posture*; and places oneself in the *presence* of God. Finally, one *prays* on the passage by reading slowly and loudly and listens to it carefully with love and peace.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Armand Nigro. Prayer: A Personal Response to God's Presence (Lafayette, La.: Gulf South Printing, 1977), 10.

The second form of meditative prayer is Ignatian contemplation of scripture (Exercises #249-#258). In this kind of prayer, Ignatius uses scriptures in conjunction with the imagination. Thus, it is also called “Ignatian Imaginative Contemplation.” For application of Ignatian contemplation of scripture, first the retreatant reminds oneself of God’s love and to become aware of God’s presence. The retreatant’s entire intention to glorify God. Then one asks for the grace that is needed in this prayer time (Exercise #46). Finally, while at ease in the chosen posture, one uses the method of Ignatian contemplation of scripture.

One immerses oneself imaginatively into a text, for example the story of the blind beggar, Bartimaeus (Mk 10:46-52). Here one tries to relive this gospel scene, and three steps are suggested. The first step is that of reading the gospel narrative of the blind man. The second step is the one who is praying imaginatively inserts oneself into the story and relives the story with oneself as one of protagonists. The third step is that one asks God to reveal how the story speaks to one’s particular life. This method allows for “sinking into” the gospel narrative with great depth.⁵⁷ Consequently, the Ignatian contemplation of scripture helps one to find God’s love and presence in one’s situation and leads one to the inner impulse of glorifying God.

The third form of meditative prayer is “Examen of conscience” (Exercises #239-#245). The primary concern for Examen of conscience is to reflect on what bad acts one has done in a given day. This is often practiced at the end of each day. According to Ignatius, one should have an Examen of conscience every day for spiritual growth in union

⁵⁷ Au, 101. See also Sadhana by De Mello.

with God. One humbly admits that one is a sinner, and sincerely asks God for mercy and forgiveness so that one can be at peace with God, with others and with oneself. In this way one can find God's love and mercy in all situations, and one may come to say "Praise to you, Lord Jesus for saving my life!"

For an application of Examen of conscience, one can reflect on the ten Commandments to understand how one has been faithful or unfaithful to God (Exercise #239). One can also reflect on the seven forms of deadly sin: pride, anger, envy, lust, gluttony, avarice and sloth (Exercise #244).

The fourth form of meditative prayer is "Examen of consciousness." Examen of consciousness is a short prayer. Ignatius highly recommends the use of Examen of Consciousness for discernment in our daily living.⁵⁸ In Examen of consciousness, the primary concern is how God is affecting and moving us and how we respond to God.⁵⁹ Examen of consciousness can help us to focus on God's will for us in daily life, reminding us of our ultimate goal, and developing our loving service to others. It especially helps us to seek God in everything, connecting moment to moment. It helps us to have a continual awareness of God's presence and to respond to God's love.⁶⁰ Doing an Examen of Consciousness can help us to grow in love with God and with others. Ignatius witnessed that whenever he wished, at anytime, he could find God.⁶¹ Thus, the Examen of

⁵⁸ George A. Aschenbrenner, "Consciousness Examen," in Notes on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola, ed. David L. Fleming (St. Louis: Review for Religious, 1983), 175.

⁵⁹ Aschenbrenner, 176.

⁶⁰ Aschenbrenner, 177.

⁶¹ Aschenbrenner, 185.

Consciousness is an art of prayer, an art of loving and glorifying God and finding God in all things.

For application, this short prayer is about ten to fifteen minutes long. Ignatius suggested it be prayed twice a day, at noon and just before retiring. To do an Examen of Consciousness effectively, one needs to be especially sincere and honest with oneself and with God. The Examen of Consciousness, found in Spiritual Exercise #43,⁶² entails five steps.

First, I pray for guidance. The Holy Spirit is asked for help in remembering what happened to me today. Second, I give thanks for the many gifts received today since every gift comes from the generous and compassionate God. Third, I focus on my feelings, not to count my failures or victories, but to attend to the movement of faith and my relationship with God. Thus I reflect on the following questions: Did I feel delightful or disquiet, peaceful or confused, humble or proud, self-forgotten or self-centered, generous or selfish, patient or impatient, gentle and kind or impolite and harsh, hopeful or desperate, calm or nervous, cool or angry, courageous or frightened?

Once the preliminary questions are dealt with, my heart can soar to God with further questions: Where was God's presence and care in my particular experience? How did I respond to God and others today? Did I love God and trust in God more? Did I become addicted to any inordinate attachment? What was my strongest feeling today?

Fourth, when I feel contrition and sorrow for my failure, I am neither shamed nor depressed. Rather I am aware how great is the love and compassion of God for me in my

⁶² Ignatius, Spiritual Exercises, trans. by Puhl, 23.

weaknesses. Finally, coming to my resolutions I ask God for blessing in order to do better, in order to love and glorify God more. St. Paul says, “I leave the past behind and with hands outstretched to whatever lies ahead I go straight for the goal” (Phil 3:13).⁶³

The fifth form of meditative prayer is mantric prayer. I can be aware of God’s presence every moment since I can allow my mind and heart open to God in a second, at any time and at any place, for example, waiting by the phone, driving on the road, lying in bed. So, in order to glorify God, I can often think of God at all times, day and night by using the mantric prayer.

The mantric prayer can be found in Exercises #258-#260. I breathe in and out slowly and constantly with full awareness, sincerity, and a reverent attitude focusing my prayerful attention on a single word such as “Abba,” or “Our Father,” or “Jesus,” or “God.” I should allow my rhythm of breathing to harmonize with the internal repetition of the word.

The sixth, and final, form of meditative prayer is Eucharist. Ignatius advises that Christians should have daily Eucharist since Eucharist is the heart of prayer. We believe Jesus’ presence particularly in the Eucharist. In Eucharist, God’s son offers himself for us (Mk 10:45). Through Jesus, in Jesus and with Jesus we have power to praise and glorify God in all things. Through the Sacrament of Eucharist, Jesus strengthens us to overcome all of our addictions to inordinate attachment. Since the Eucharist is the central Sacrament for Catholics and other Christians who are familiar with it, I will not spend time explaining it.

⁶³ Aschenbrenner, 182-83.

Alongside meditation, Ignatius suggests the prayer of contemplation. Centering prayer is a contemporary form of contemplative prayer. The method is rather simple, as it is totally receptive. This method allows the Christian participant to relax and be quiet. The activity is the focus on God's own self. We wait for God's visitation in stillness, since we have already chosen God to be the center of our lives. "Be still and know that I am God" (Ps 46:10).

There are three steps that Basil Pennington, a modern writer and proponent of centering prayer, suggests. The first is to trust that God's presence is here, and that God has love for one's being. Second, one goes on to say repetitively a lovely word like "Jesus" or "God" with awareness, belief, and a loving heart. Third, one is to return to God through the repetition of the word, if at any time one is aware of anything else in the mind.⁶⁴ Centering prayer is both basic and simple, and its aim is having the presence of God centered in the heart. Our longing is fellowship with the divine presence of God, to find God in all things for the greater glory of God.

According to Ignatius, after praying in any of its forms, it is necessary to reflect on one's feelings, what happened to one in relationship with God in order to glorify God and to love God in all things. The following questions are for review of one's feelings:

-What happened to me during my prayer time? I should focus on movements of deep disturbance, anxiety, fear, boredom or peace and joy.

-How did God seem to me?

-What did I feel the most in my prayer time? How was my mood in prayer?

⁶⁴ Au, 105-06. See also Centering Prayer by M. Basil Pennington (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1986).

- What did God try to tell me in my prayer?
- Did I experience the reality of God's love more?
- Was I able to see God in all things?
- Did I experience giving glory to God more fully?
- Is there any point I need to pray over in my next period of prayer?
- Can I improve my personal prayer in union with God?

I should jot down some of my feelings for both spiritual growth and for informing my spiritual director. Then I thank God and ask God for forgiveness and for what I need.⁶⁵

Finding God in Discernment of spirits.⁶⁶ The Discernment of Spirits is the second form through which we can grow in finding God in all things. Finding God in discernment of spirits means to discern the will of God in all of our situations.⁶⁷ Discernment of spirits is a way in which prayer and our actions meet. Ignatius' rules for discernment of spirits have been applied over four hundred years throughout the Christian world. Ignatius saw how the struggle between the good spirit and the evil spirit was in every person.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Maryland Province of the Society of Jesus, Place Me with Your Son, xviii. The role of spiritual director is to help a directee to have a deep relationship with God, to grow in loving and glorifying God in all things.

⁶⁶ I treat discernment of spirits separately from prayer because the discernment process involves the whole person: The feelings to discern in prayer, the intellect to gather and to judge information, and the will to decide for doing God's will.

⁶⁷ Michael J. Buckley, "Discernment of Spirits," in The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality, ed. Michael Downey (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1993), 279.

⁶⁸ For Ignatius, rules for discernment of spirits are for an individual to do God's will. A discussion of "Communal discernment" can be found in Frank Rogers' article, "In Harmony with the Music of God's Reign: The Practice of Spiritual Discernment," in Communal Practices and the Formation of Faith, forthcoming. Communal discernment can also be found in "A Discerning Community," in Weeds among the Wheat, by Thomas H. Green (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1984), 177-87. Marriage

Professor Frank Rogers says that “discernment takes place in the *concrete situations of life*” such as dealing with neighbors, vocational decisions and marriage.⁶⁹ Some common questions are, “What should I choose for my life’s work?” “Shall I stay with this marriage?” “Shall I remain in religious life?” For Rogers, “Discernment is a form of decision-making, but it is decision-making done in the context of faith.”⁷⁰ John Futrell, a theologian, says that discernment “involves choosing the way of the light of Christ instead of the way of the darkness of the Evil one and living out the consequences of this choice through discerning what specific decisions and actions are demanded to follow Christ here and now.”⁷¹

Discernment of spirits is a complicated issue. For Ignatius, during his long retreat in Manresa, he decided that God’s will for him was to go to Jerusalem and remain there to serve Jesus Christ. However, the provincial of the Franciscan order in Jerusalem refused him permission to stay on. Thus, “discernment rarely yields absolute certainty, ambiguities remain even when the direction seems rather clear.”⁷² In the same way, Mary had trouble in her discernment when she heard: “Rejoice, O highly favored daughter! The Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women” (Lk 1:28). She asked how the role of motherhood related to her virginal state.

encounter. Christian life community and charismatic renewal rely on Communal discernment to listen to God’s will in making decisions.

⁶⁹ See Rogers.

⁷⁰ Rogers.

⁷¹ See Charles J. Healey, “Prayer: The Context of Discernment,” in Notes on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola, ed. David L. Fleming (St. Louis: Review for Religious, 1983), 197.

⁷² See Rogers.

A general rule of discernment of spirits is seen in Ignatius' experience of his day-dreams. Ignatius experienced two kinds of dreams.⁷³ He was feeling sad when he finished the dream of doing great deeds of chivalry to win the favor of a great lady. But when Ignatius finished the dream of following Christ and imitating the saints, he continued to feel joy and peace.⁷⁴ Rogers defines "feelings of consolation are those that give rise to life, love, peace, joy, creativity, and communion. Feelings of desolation are those that give rise to despair, confusion, alienation, destructiveness, and discord."⁷⁵ In Exercise #316, Ignatius says "I call it consolation when some interior motion is caused in the soul whereby the soul comes to be inflamed with love of its Creator and Lord; and consequently when it is able to love no other created thing on the face of the earth in itself, but only in the Creator of them all." The feeling of consolation belongs to God like a drop of water enters a sponge without noise (Exercise #335).⁷⁶ If a feeling does not come from God, it is the feeling of desolation which enters a person with a noise resounding, like a drop of water hitting a rock (Exercise #335). In spiritual discernment, Ignatius says

⁷³ William A. Barry, Finding God in All Things (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1991), 12.

⁷⁴ Later, Ignatius discovered that the former dream belonged to the evil spirit, or bad spirit, or feelings of desolation. The latter dream belonged to the good spirit or feelings of consolation which came from the Spirit of God. He used these dreams as a foundation for his "Discernment of Spirits." Besides the two types of "spirits" mentioned here, I notice that there is also the "human spirit" that some people believe in.

⁷⁵ See Rogers.

⁷⁶ In the Exercise #330, Ignatius says that only God can bring about consolation "without any previous cause," whereas a consolation with a preceding cause can come from "either the good spirit or the evil spirit" (Exercise #331). According to Ignatius, Satan can deceive a person with a consolation with a preceding cause. For example, one can feel very good with an act of stealing (preceding cause). An example of consolation without previous cause can be explained by my own experience. As a twelve-year old boy, I felt myself being loved, the intense feeling of God's love for me. I could not find the previous cause. It was a great grace that I could not earn or merit by my own effort.

that we need to acknowledge the good spirit and the evil spirit. These spirits “come from within our very selves and outside of us [environment].”⁷⁷

The purpose of discernment of spirits is to learn what God wants and to do God’s will.⁷⁸ In the Exercise #23, Ignatius says that Christians should decide always for the greater glory of God: “Our one desire and choice should be what is *more conducive to the end* for which we are created” (emphasis mine). The best state of life for Christians is that to which the Lord is calling them.⁷⁹ Our deepest wanting and God’s purpose for us are consistent with each other, and are to be sought within us with peace.⁸⁰ “To be attuned to the one action of God, to his will, is to be extraordinarily free, happy and fulfilled even in the midst of a world of sorrow and pain. One can, perhaps, understand how Jesus could celebrate the Last Supper even though he knew in his bones that it would be his last.”⁸¹

⁷⁷ Fleming, 114.

⁷⁸ Christians trust in God that God’s will is to do good for us. A Good God never wills evil for us (Mt 7: 7-11). God loves us, cares for us and shares God’s life with us. God wants the best for us. God’s will for us is happiness and peace. Our joy comes from our total acceptance of God’s will. Thus, we give up our own will for God’s will. We will to submit our actions and attachments to the will of God. So, God’s will and our deepest desire should be in harmony with each other. We do all things intelligently as much as we can, and if things are beyond our control, we need to accept them as God’s will. St. Paul says that God’s plans are all things for the best for those who love God (Rom 8:28). This is why “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Pr 9:10). This is why Jesus says: “My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work” (Jn 4:34); “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Mt 26:39); and “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Mt 6:10)—the willingness to follow God’s will in everything. Finally, God’s will for us is to believe in Jesus: “It is the Father’s will that whoever sees the son and believes in him shall have eternal life” (Jn 6:40).

⁷⁹ English, 217.

⁸⁰ Thomas N. Hart, The Art of Christian Listening (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 83.

⁸¹ Michael A. Barry, “Toward a Theology of Discernment,” The Way: Supplement, Spring 1989, 135.

However, God leaves us to make our own decisions since God respects us as mature and responsible people. God accepts us as friends rather than servants (Jn 15:15). God gives us God's son, Jesus, life and freedom and God leaves us a choice. "Look, I now set in front of you the way of life and the way of death" (Jer 21:8) and we have freedom to choose God or not. If we choose God as our ultimate life goal, we may have life eternal (Dt 30:19). According to Ignatius, a choice in harmony with God's will brings peace; a choice out of harmony with God's will brings perturbation.⁸²

For application of discernment of spirits, Rogers says that "Spiritual discernment is an art. It, to be sure, lacks the precision of science. It relies on a combination of skill, sensitivity, intuition and wisdom. One grows in the practice of discernment much like a musician grows."⁸³ In the same way "the Holy Spirit dwelling in our hearts can be likened to a tuning fork set to the music of God's action. We can become attuned to the one action by becoming more and more aware of the tone played in our hearts by the Holy Spirit."⁸⁴ So, we learn to discern the will of God by doing. In practicing discernment of spirits, I will discuss particularly the "indifferent attitude," dealing with spiritual consolation and desolation, and the process of discernment of spirits.

According to Ignatius, we do need an indifferent attitude for spiritual discernment since the discernment of spirits is for the "greater glory of God." Indifference does not mean to be indifferent to people with unfeeling (apathy) or irresponsibility to people.

⁸² Rahner, Spiritual Exercises, 83.

⁸³ Rogers.

⁸⁴ Barry, "Toward a Theology of Discernment," 139.

Indifference also does not mean that we do not care for the things of this world. Indifference, like freedom, requires us to make a decision to unite ourselves with God, to make our will one with God. When we unite ourselves with God, indifference is the result.⁸⁵ Indifference means that in making a better choice to glorify God, we should not base our choice on our likes and dislikes. For example, health, riches and power can enable us to love God and glorify God or they can ruin our lives leading us far from God. They can tempt us to become selfish and self-centered. As a result, we become miserable and upset. Indifference is the balance at equilibrium, without leaning to either side (for example health or sickness, riches or poverty, honor or dishonor, a long life or a short life, Exercise #23). Indifference also means we do not want anything else to get in the way of loving God, of glorifying God. Before every choice that we have in life, we want to keep ourselves in balance in order to discern what will more surely bring us closer to God.⁸⁶ An indifferent attitude is valuable for the choice of what is “more conducive” for the greater glory of God. An indifferent attitude requires faith in God’s providence that “all things shall be well” for those who love God.⁸⁷ Thus, indifference is flexibility for whatever choice we make. We can move forward to glorify God and to praise God. With courage, Job says “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, naked I shall return. Yahweh gave, Yahweh has taken back. Blessed be the name of Yahweh!” (Jb 1:21). Job dared to praise God in his good situation as well as in his bad situation. Scriptures also demonstrate

⁸⁵ English, 33.

⁸⁶ Barry, Finding God in All Things, 41.

⁸⁷ De Mello, 134.

well this kind of indifference, the sense of freedom and detachment from whatever hinders and prevents our striving to focus on God alone. The prophet, Samuel, says, “Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening” (1Sam 3:10). The Psalmist writes, “Here am I, Lord, I come to do your will” (Ps 40: 7-8). Isaiah also says, “Here am I; send me!” (Is 6:8).

Rahner says “Unless we operate on a principle of *indifference*. . . . There is danger in life of self-centeredness, a danger of going from one excess to another.”⁸⁸ Ignatius insisted that we must be detached from disordinate attachments so that we can discover God in all things.⁸⁹ Indeed, selfish attachment to riches, power, and blinding peer pressure can be a big obstacle for us in discernment of spirits so that we cannot find God in all things in order to glorify God.⁹⁰ If people become slaves of passion, the world and the devil’s works, they cannot serve God with their whole freedom.⁹¹ In Winning by Letting Go, Elizabeth Brenner describes a story of catching a monkey in rural India.

First they cut a hole in a box. Then they put a tasty nut in that box. The hole is just big enough for a monkey to put its hand through. But once the monkey holds on to the nut, its fist becomes too big to withdraw. So the monkey has a choice: either the monkey drops the nut and goes free, or the monkey holds on to it and will be trapped. Somehow, monkeys often become attached to the tasty nut and stay trapped.⁹²

Likewise, Christians are easily addicted to the world and the flesh (1 Jn 2:15-17). They become slaves to them. Thus, they are not free to love God above all things. They

⁸⁸ Quoted in English, 49.

⁸⁹ Rahner, Spiritual Exercises, 273.

⁹⁰ Richard M. Gula, Reason Informed by Faith (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 323.

⁹¹ Rahner, Spiritual Exercises, 22.

⁹² Quoted in Link, 164.

become attached to the gifts of God, not the Giver. They need to let go and put all things in the hands of God, so that they can find God in all things in order to glorify only God. They need to refuse to be a slave of anything on earth in order to love God and to do God's will more than all other things.

The truth is, that the things attractive to humans, whether riches or honor or power, will all pass away sooner or later. Why are Christians so interested in what they are sure to lose? These things themselves are not obstacles between God and Christians. These earthly things are absolutely necessary because they are the place of Christian service and glorify God.⁹³ Ignatius strongly mentions that Christians should use these gifts for attaining the ultimate goal for which they were created. Christians need to use them properly in order to direct themselves to God (Exercise #23). These things are similar to "the finger" that Buddha talked about. The finger which points toward the moon is not the moon itself. The worst thing would be simply to become attached to the finger, since the function of the finger is to point away from itself to God.⁹⁴

Particularly, how do we deal with spiritual consolation and desolation? In spiritual consolation, Ignatius advises us to be humble as much as possible for we remember how weak we are in our time of desolation (Exercises #323-#324). In spiritual desolation, Ignatius advises us to renew God's love for us and reaffirm our faith in God's providence (Exercise #324). He says that we should not make any decision when we are nervous, fearful and confused. We need to be patient, to wait in order to calm down, to see more

⁹³ Rahner, Spiritual Exercises, 20.

⁹⁴ This insight comes from the course "Christian Faith and Chinese Religion," taught by Paul Clasper at Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, Calif., in fall 1990.

clearly our situation before making a decision. In case “We find ourselves weighed down by a certain desolation,” we should not change our previous decision, we must fight back “whatever is making us less than we should be” (Exercise #318). For example, we might seek help from our spiritual director; we need to pray intensively (Exercise #319).

When the evil spirit behaves “like a spoiled child,” we need to be firm with that child (Exercise #325). The evil spirit also behaves like “a false lover.” The false lover tries to keep “temptations secret” in order to achieve “his own selfish ends.” Thus, “our tactic must be to bring out into the light of day such “secret temptations.” We need to confide in our spiritual director or confessor or superior (Exercise #326). The evil spirit also behaves like a military commander who tries to attack at our weakest points, such as our addiction to honor, pride and riches. We need to know ourselves and need to be aware of our weakness in order to avoid trouble and ask the Lord for help (Exercise #327).

For an application, Ignatius suggests some methods of making a decision.⁹⁵ The first method of making decisions considers the following steps:

1. Clearly know what I want to decide.
2. Be aware that my ultimate goal is to love, praise and glorify God. Choosing whatever means such as marriage or priesthood or religious life is secondary, because God must come before all creatures.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ I selected two methods of Ignatius although he had many more rules of discernment of spirits.

⁹⁶ Fleming, 67-69.

3. Ask the Holy Spirit for guidance since doing discernment of spirits is to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will teach us all things (Jn 14:26)--to know "What am I to do, Lord?" and the Holy Spirit will guide us into all truth (Jn 16:13)

4. List and weigh the pros and cons of my proposed decision. I can gather information by asking advice from my spiritual director, listening to the Church laws, and following the guidelines of scripture, for example.

5. Consider which alternative seems more reasonable to my ultimate goal instead of my selfish or sensual inclination. The indifferent attitude is necessary in this step since it helps me to avoid my selfish attachments.

6. Coming to my decision, I ask God to accept and to confirm if my decision is for God's greater service and glory. God answers me through feelings of consolation, such as peace and joy since "Peace is my farewell to you, my peace is my gift to you; I do not give it to you as the world gives peace. Do not be distressed or fearful" (Jn 14:27). "You will know them by their fruits" (Mt 7: 20)--the tree is known by its fruits. If my decision comes from the good spirit, God confirms this in me with peace, joy, love, hope, faith, patience, kindness, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness and self-control (Gal 5: 22-23). If my decision comes from the evil spirit, I become confused, anxious, worry, nervous, fearful and depressed (Gal 5: 19-21).

The second method of making decisions considers the following steps. If I feel that I have made a decision already, then Ignatius recommends:

1. "To consider what I would advise another person who came to me facing the same choice which I now face."⁹⁷

2. To imagine myself on my deathbed and ask what I would then wish to have chosen.⁹⁸

In conclusion, Rahner says that spiritual discernment is an on-going process since we constantly need renewed effort. Particularly, our world changes rapidly with new situations and new information. We need to be open to change since to live is to change. To live is to discern constantly.⁹⁹

Finding God in loving service to one another. The third means through which one finds God in all things is *prayer for service*. Finding God in all things means to love and serve others in all things. Ignatius says that we need to ask God for "an intimate knowledge of the many blessings received, that filled with gratitude for all, I may in all things love and serve the Divine Majesty" (Exercise #233). As mentioned, we can find God in our prayer and spiritual discernment. We also find God in loving service to others. Henri Nouwen says that prayer and service to others belong together.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, prayer practices, if they are authentic, lead to the practice of charity and justice.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Green, Weeds among the Wheat, 86.

⁹⁸ Green, Weeds among the Wheat, 86.

⁹⁹ Rahner, Spiritual Exercises, 11.

¹⁰⁰ Cited in Robert McAfee Brown, Spirituality and Liberation (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1988), 138.

¹⁰¹ John L. Vessels, "Apostles of Prayer," America, 19 Nov. 1994, 24.

Thus, prayerful people are fully alive and real people; they are “down to earth.”¹⁰² Prayer must be transformed into action, and by prayer, we gain power to serve others with our sincere heart, to give ourselves to others as Jesus did. Moreover, the effectiveness of the Word of God does not depend on how well Christians understand it, but rather on how they accept and practice it.¹⁰³ We focus on God’s word and live it since faith without good works is dead “as a body without breath” (Jas 2:14-26). Thus, prayer is for loving service to others in all things. Prayer can be expressed as an act of love and holiness since “faith can only grow when exercised, and love can only be fruitful when practiced.”¹⁰⁴

Finally, Christians believe and worship God who is above all creatures, for God is love (1 Jn 4:8); thus love is the most important act for us to do all the time (1 Cor 13). It is always possible for us to grow in love, no matter what our situation in life is. According to Ignatius, love is not merely to be on our lips but love ought to manifest itself in deeds (Exercise #230). Our salvation depends on God and God seriously counts on our sincere heart in serving others, even in a small deed like the widow offering her money to God (Mk 12:41-44). We love and serve God in others (Gn 1:27). When we love, respect and accept our neighbor, we are loving God who is both so close and so far. Indeed, God did not become anything else but a man--the humanity is the fullness of Christ.¹⁰⁵ “Whenever

¹⁰² Green, Opening to God, 17.

¹⁰³ Vessels, 24.

¹⁰⁴ Vessels, 24.

¹⁰⁵ Rahner, Spiritual Exercises, 112-14.

you did this for one of the least. . . . you did it for me” (Mt 25: 25-36, 39). God blesses us so that we, in turn, can be a blessing to others. We can serve one another for the love of God, for the greater glory of God. We live also for others, not only for ourselves (2 Cor 5:15). We can use our talents and gifts in serving others (Lk 4:14-21). For instance, I use my talent in Tai-Chi to serve others. In helping others, we can gain peace and develop our own being.¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, it is much better for me to co-operate with others in service rather than to do things by myself. In fact, it is not possible for me to save the world by myself alone (Jn 15:5), but all Christians work together as the Body of Christ for bearing much fruit. The world, the flesh and the devil’s works are so powerful that we have no power to fight against them. If we want to have a peaceful life, we must detach from them. We must listen to Jesus and respond to his invitation in co-operating with him (Exercises #145-#146), as Jesus and his disciples worked together in their ministry. Likewise, we are one body in Christ (1 Cor 12:12-26). We need to work together for the love of Jesus. We need to listen to Jesus and imitate him in action, to “love one another” (Jn 15: 17 and 1 Jn 4:7).

Summary

Saint Ignatius used spiritual exercises to glorify God. The key for Ignatius’ response to God is finding God in all things in order to glorify God and to unite ourselves with God. Finding God in all things results from prayer, discernment of spirits and loving service to one another, “Contemplation in Action” (Exercise #230). Through prayer, discernment of spirits, and loving service to others, Ignatius realized that God loved him

¹⁰⁶ Rahner, Spiritual Exercises, 119.

and this filled him with gratitude. In return, he devotedly offered himself with his entire will, freedom, memory and understanding to serve God in others. Like Ignatius, Christians can adapt Ignatian spirituality, as a way to glorify God. Christians can find God in their prayer, discernment of spirits and loving service to one another, in doing even small things with love--even smiling, for example. To find God in all things is a prayerful attitude which Christians can nourish and develop throughout their lives.

In general, Ignatian prayers in theory and practice lead Christians to glorify God, to love God with all their heart and mind. As a result, they try to find God in all things. If God can be found in all things, even in ordinary things, then can Christians find God in Taoist practices? Can they use Taoist practices to glorify God? To answer these questions, first I will explain Taoist practices in theory and practice in the next chapter. Then I will discuss how Ignatian prayer and Taoist meditation compliment each other for the greater glory of God.

Chapter 3

Taoist Theory and Practice

There is. . . . A time to be born, and a time to die. . . . A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance. (Ecclesiastes 3: 1-4)

Taoist Theory

While Christians believe God created the cosmos, Taoists believe that Tao is the mother of the universe, the source of all things, the vital force of life for guiding all things in harmonious development and interaction through “Chi.”¹ Chi means power or energy. Tao produces Yin and Yang and the movements of Yin and Yang produce Chi.² Chi is life energy, the energetic foundation of all life. In Chinese, Chi means breath, air or gas.³ According to Huang Ti, the Yellow Emperor in the Han Dynasty,

The root of the way of life, of birth and change is Chi (energy); the myriad things of heaven and earth all obey this law. Thus Chi in the periphery envelops heaven and earth. Chi in the interior activates them. Chi is the source where from the sun, moon, and stars derive their light, the thunder, rain, wind and cloud their being, the four seasons and the myriad things their birth, growth, gathering and storing: all this is brought about by Chi. Man’s possession of life is completely dependent upon this Chi.⁴

Chi is the invisible life force. In the universe, this vital energy can be expressed like the sun. In a human, this Chi can be felt and its effect on one’s body is noticeable. One can feel warmth in one’s body or flames of energy shooting out of one’s fingers. Chi

¹ Archie J. Bahm, Tao Teh King (Albuquerque, N.Mex.: World Books, 1986), 43.

² The movement of Yin and Yang, which produces Chi, is like a battery. Negative and positive movement produces the electric current.

³ Jane Stillman, “An Exploration of QiQong,” T’ai Chi, Feb. 1992, 24.

⁴ Stephen Chang, The Complete System of Self-Healing (San Francisco: Tao Publishing, 1986), 29.

can be felt by practicing Chi Kung. Practitioners report sensations of heat in their lower abdomens and feeling tingling sensations at their fingers. When a person is full of Chi, that person becomes very strong. One's Chi is like the tires of a truck which are filled with air. "When the tires are full, the truck can transport heavy loads over long distances. But if the tires lose their air, they cannot even hold themselves up, much less carry the body of the truck."⁵

Like the Spirit of God at work all the time, chi is an dynamic energetic consequence of the nature of Tao, and Tao is the concept of the entirety. *Tao is more* than what Taoists can express since Tao is formless, limitless and nameless. Tao cannot be defined, "The Tao that can be told of is not the eternal Tao; the name that can be named is not the eternal name."⁶ However, Tao can be translated as "Way" or "Path": the Ultimate Reality.⁷ Tao can also be manifested as follows.

There was something nebulous yet complete,
Born before Heaven and earth.
Silent, empty,
Self-sufficient and unchanging,
Revolving without cease and without fail,
It acts as the mother of the world.
I do not know its name,
And address it as "Tao."⁸

⁵ Da Liu, T'ai Chi Ch'uan and Meditation (New York: Schocken Books, 1986), 55.

⁶ Wing-Tsit Chan, A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1963), 139 as quoted in John A. Hutchison, Paths of Faith, 4th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1991), 228.

⁷ Hutchison, 228.

⁸ Quoted in Heinrich Dumoulin, Zen Enlightenment, trans. John C. Maraldo (New York: Weatherhill, 1979), 29. This verse is from the Classic Tao Te Ching (The Way and Power) written during the third century B.C.E.

Taoism is that religion that seeks to live in harmony with the Tao. The two classic books for understanding Taoism are I Ching and Tao Te Ching.

I Ching

I Ching means “Classic of Changes.” It is one of the five Classics of the Chinese tradition, written about 2,800 B.C.E. Its philosophy is summed up in the theory of Yin and Yang that most East Asian peoples hold.⁹

Yin and Yang. Yin and Yang are components of Tao. They are the two principles of all existence. The symbol of Yin and Yang is a circle containing one Yin (black) and one Yang (white).¹⁰ They are interconnected harmoniously. The circle is bisected with a curved line; one side is black with a white dot and the other is white with a black dot. Everything has both Yin and Yang within itself. For example, males and females in animals; positive and negative in electric current; soft and hard movements in Tai Chi practices. Thus, Yin and Yang are equally important. They are like the front and back of the same coin. If one of them were to be eliminated, life would cease to exist.¹¹ They are opposite components. However, they join together and complement each other.

The aim of Taoism is to keep a balance between Yin and Yang. When Yin becomes extreme, it will turn to Yang. For example in relationship to rain: there is monsoon and then there is drought. Another example of the balance of Yin and Yang is the alternation of suffering and joy in a person’s life. A third illustration is that of the

⁹ Hutchison, 216.

¹⁰ Hutchison, 219.

¹¹ Foen Tjoeng Lie, Tai Chi Ch’uan (New York: Sterling Publishing, 1988), 119.

succession of the seasons; there is the cold of winter, and then comes the warmth of summer. Likewise, quietude gives rise to movement in Taoist meditation and Tai Chi movements.

The law of change. According to the Chinese tradition, Emperor Fuhsi (2852-2738 B.C.E.) found the trigrams which are a tool for understanding the law of change--the I Ching. The I Ching explains that all things change because of the sixty-four possible hexagrams. The sixty-four hexagrams can be formed by the combination of eight trigrams. A trigram is combined by three horizontal lines, broken or solid; in which the upper line stands for heaven, the lower line stands for earth, and the middle line stands for humanity. The combination of two trigrams, one above the other, forms a hexagram. The myriad possible combinations of these lines constitute the unending cycles of change. "Everything is in motion" and "everything changes."¹² Life is changing as a river that is flowing forever. The I Ching speaks of the Tao and its interrelationship to life. Thus, the purpose of the I Ching is

to provide a system of knowledge whereby man can analyze the pattern of changes in life governed by the Immutable Law of Change. If, then, with the help of this "book of wisdom" we are successful in attaining a deep understanding of the laws of change, and we can relate our affairs to the right point in the everlasting process of ebb and flow, rising and falling, we should be able to determine the best action to be taken in every event met in life.¹³

¹² Jung Young Lee, The Theology of Change (Maryknoll, N. Y.: Orbis Books, 1979), 3.

¹³ John Blofeld, trans., I Ching (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1968), 230.

Tao Te Ching

Tao means “Way, Truth.” Te means “power, virtue” and Ching means “book.”¹⁴ Tao Te Ching is the “The Way and Power,” a brief poem divided into eighty-one stanzas.¹⁵ Tao Te Ching is the fundamental text of Chinese philosophy, attributed to legendary Laotsu (500 B.C.E.). Laotsu emphasized living peacefully and in harmony with the nature of Tao. Laotsu followed the I Ching to develop Tao Te Ching.¹⁶ Tao is the key in Tao Te Ching.

According to Laotsu, the nature of Tao is to live closely to nature since we are part of nature. The nature of Tao is like water. “The best (man) is like water. Water is good; it benefits all things and does not compete with them. Water dwells in lowly places that all disdain. This is why it is so near to Tao.”¹⁷ Water finds a way around an obstacle instead of fighting against it. Laotsu emphasizes the humility of water by saying that the reason rivers and seas receive the homage of a hundred mountains is that they keep below the mountains.

Nothing is weaker than water; Yet, for attacking what is hard and tough,
Nothing surpasses it, nothing equals it.
The principle is what is weak overcomes what is strong, and what is yielding
conquers what is resistant.¹⁸

¹⁴ Lawrence Galante, Tai Chi: The Supreme Ultimate, ed. Betsy Selman (York Beach, Maine: Samuel Weiser, 1981), 37.

¹⁵ Hutchison, 227.

¹⁶ Hutchison, 228.

¹⁷ Quoted in Hutchison, 229.

¹⁸ Quoted in Bahm, 66. This verse is from the Tao Te Ching.

The nature of Tao is also expressed in breathing. Laotsu recommends that we breathe from the stomach just as a child does. He asks: "Can you concentrate your mind to use breath, making it soft and quiet as an infant's?"¹⁹ Finally, the nature of Tao is like the body of a child whose muscles are healthy and relaxed.

To cooperate with the Tao means to do what is natural. The natural way is like the rotation of day and night. The natural way is "Wu-Wei"--inaction, action without action. Wu-wei does not mean not to do, but to follow nature, to act spontaneously, effortlessly, in harmony with the Tao.²⁰ In practicing breathing, for example, the Taoist practitioner is aware of one's breath. Meanwhile, the practitioner should let go of all thoughts with complete detachment, "let them come, let them go." This is a natural way, Wu-Wei. Wu-Wei is also like the characteristic of mirror that Thomas Merton describes:

The mirror is thoroughly egoless and mindless. If a flower comes, it reflects a flower, if a bird comes, it reflects a bird. It shows a beautiful object as beautiful, an ugly object as ugly. Everything is revealed as it is. There is no discriminating mind or self-consciousness on the part of the mirror. If something comes, the mirror reflects; if it disappears the mirror just lets it disappear.²¹

Finally, living according to the nature of Tao means to live in harmony with nature, to accept things as coming and going, life and death, cross and resurrection. To live in harmony with nature also means to let body and mind be united. Laotsu says, "Can you keep the spirit and body without scattering?" Da Liu, Chi Kung and Tai Chi master,

¹⁹ Quoted in Liu, 13.

²⁰ Hutchison, 231.

²¹ Quoted in William H. Shannon, Thomas Merton's Dark Path (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1981), 199.

explains this idea by saying that when body and mind are united, one can be whole; when body and mind are in harmony with each other, one can achieve longevity.²²

Taoist Practice

Chi Kung and Tai Chi have come from Taoism, especially from the theory of Yin and Yang. Chi Kung is older than Tai Chi. Tai Chi can be described as Chi Kung in movement. Both aim for meditation, for healing, health, and longevity.²³

Chi Kung.²⁴

Chi is the vital energy. Kung means to work or to train.²⁵ “Chi Kung is the esoteric art of energy training,”²⁶ developing the body’s energy circulation in order to increase energy, to balance it and to control it. The I Ching introduces the concepts of Yin and Yang. The movement between Yin and Yang produces Chi. Thus, Master Kit says that the Yin and Yang concepts become “essential elements in Chi Kung philosophy.”²⁷ In other words, Chi Kung essentially assumes the validity of the concepts of Yin and Yang as defined in the I Ching.

Chuang Tsu (400 B.C.E.) described the relationship between breathing and health:

²² Liu, 13.

²³ Liu, 100.

²⁴ Chi Kung can be called QiQong and QiGong.

²⁵ Masaru Takahashi and Stephen Brown, QiGong for Health (New York: Japan Publications, 1986), 9.

²⁶ Wong Kiew Kit, The Art of Chi Kung (Rockport, Mass.: Element Books, 1993), xi

²⁷ Kit, 5.

“The men of old breathed clear down to their heels.”²⁸ Thus, practitioners can say that the breathing method of Chi Kung had been used around Chuang Tsu’s time. Indeed, Chi Kung is very old. It has been practiced in antiquity not only by the Chinese, but also by people of other great cultures at different places and times. It has been known by different names: in India--Yoga; in the ancient Greek and Egyptian cultures--the art of the mysteries; and in the Tibetan culture--the art of wisdom.²⁹

In Chi Kung practice, there are two methods of Chi Kung training. The hard Chi Kung is for martial arts and the soft Chi Kung is for curing illness, for promoting health, longevity and spiritual development.³⁰ The hard Chi Kung can be used for a fighting art in Kung-Fu and Karate. In Kung-Fu and Karate, practitioners use the hard Chi Kung to develop fast, forceful and accurate kicking and punching. For my project I only emphasize the soft Chi Kung used to promote health and longevity, for centered effective Christian prayers.

To avoid an excited state before practicing Chi Kung, a practitioner should let the mind relax for five to ten minutes by being aware of thoughts and feelings and letting them go. After practicing Chi Kung, one should warm up by rubbing the hands together and touching the face, neck, chest, stomach, feet and the back in order to let the Chi flow to all parts of the body.³¹ Chi can be developed in sitting, standing and walking positions.

²⁸ Quoted in Jwing Ming Yang, Chi Kung (Jamaica Plain, Mass.: Yang’s Martial Arts Association, 1990), 4.

²⁹ Kit, 5.

³⁰ Takahashi and Brown, 43.

³¹ Takahashi and Brown, 40.

In a sitting position, one can use a pillow or pad underneath one's hips in order to keep the legs from falling asleep, especially when one sits in the lotus position. One can sit on a chair which permits one's knees to bend at right angles. One should sit at the edge of the chair to keep one's back straight. Sitting properly helps focus one's mind and reduce distractions. "When you sit up properly, your mind becomes orderly. Conversely, when you sit in a slouch, your mind slouches, too."³²

In a standing position, practitioners' feet should be parallel and apart from each other about one shoulder's width. Practitioners should bend their knees slightly so that they can stand erectly and be rooted as a tree. They can hold their hands in front of the lower abdomen if they want to focus on Tan Tien,³³ or they can hold their hands extended in a half circle at the chest level if they want to focus on their chest.

In walking, practitioners should not hurry to arrive at the destination, but should enjoy and be aware of every step. When lifting their left foot, they should be aware that their left foot is lifting. When their left foot touches, they should be aware that their left foot is touching the ground. Practitioners can combine walking with breathing in their practice. They should wear comfortable shoes to allow toes and feet to move easily, so that while walking their feet are sure, maintaining solid balance.

³² J. K. Kadowaki, Zen and the Bible (London: Routeledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), 15.

³³ Tan Tien is an Acupuncture point which is located below the navel, approximately one to two inches.

Tai Chi

Tai Chi was invented around the fourteenth century. Tai Chi means “Grand Ultimate” in which Yin and Yang mix. Tai Chi has been also called Tai Chi Chuan.³⁴ The history of Tai Chi is interwoven the history of Chinese Buddhist meditation. Ta Mo, an Indian Buddhist, came to China in the Han Dynasty in the sixth century. He invented Chinese Buddhist meditation. The Chinese Buddhist meditation greatly influenced Tai Chi meditation practice. Buddhist meditation has emphasized awareness of all things for obtaining enlightenment, while Taoist meditation has emphasized living closely with nature, to relax and to live in harmony with Tao. Thus, Tai Chi practice is an integration of Taoist meditation and Buddhist meditation--a combination of awareness and relaxation in performing Tai Chi movements.³⁵

It is noteworthy that San Feng Chang (1279-1368), a renowned Taoist monk, invented Tai Chi at Wu Dan Mountain, which is located at the South of Chun Hsien, Hubei Province, in China.³⁶ There, Chang observed the fight between a snake and a bird. After fighting, the bird flew back to its tree and the snake went back to its hole to rest. The next day, they repeated the same sequence: the fighting and the resting. Chang was impressed with how relaxed the bird and the snake were. The bird's movements were sometimes slow and sometimes quick. The snake's were similar. In general, Chang observed that they always alternated between the slow and quick movements, between

³⁴ Yang, Chi Kung, 9. “Chuan” means “fist,” “boxing” or “style.”

³⁵ Liu, 19.

³⁶ Yang, Chi Kung, 43.

fighting and resting--working and relaxing. From this observation, he invented Tai Chi Chuan, modeled on the movements of the animals³⁷ Chang created a style of movements that sought to alternate slow movements and quick movements in a way like the animals. The purpose of Tai Chi is for better meditation, for health and for longevity by cooperating with the way of Tao. It has taken centuries to develop the three major styles of Tai Chi, which are Chen, Wu and Yang. The Chen style resembles Kung Fu which develops fast, powerful and accurate kicking and punching. The Wu style consists of movements in small circles. Like wrestling, it involves throwing and pushing techniques. The Yang style involves movements with large circles. Its movements are graceful, round, slow and gentle.³⁸ I will limit my project to discussion of the invention of the Yang style.

The Yang style was founded by Master Yang Lu Chan (1780-1873), who was a student of Master Chen Chang Shen, from the Chen School. Master Yang Lu Chan developed the Yang style. This Yang style was further refined and arranged by his grandson, Yang Cheng Fu (1883-1936).³⁹ The Yang style is characterized by “quiet, smooth, harmonious and steadily-flowing movement.” The Yang style has “an overall wavelike appearance.”⁴⁰ The Yang Tai Chi can be expressed as being still like the mountain, but its movements are like the flow of a long river.⁴¹ Originally the Yang style

³⁷ Liu, 100.

³⁸ Jane Hallander, The Complete Guide to Kung Fu Fighting Styles (Burbank, Calif.: Unique Publications, 1985), 58.

³⁹ Yang, Chi Kung, 10.

⁴⁰ Lic, 112.

⁴¹ Xuan Long Ly, Vo Dang Thai Cuc Quyen [Wu Dang Tai Chi Chuan] (Saigon: Thu-Xa, 1982), 6.

had one hundred and eight movements. Its movements are characteristically graceful, with round large and relaxing circles--symbolizing the Yin and Yang theory. In the Yang style body and mind, breathing and movement, hands and feet are coordinated. Every movement should be done slowly, gently and comfortably.⁴²

Most people practice Tai Chi for health or for self-defense. Like Chi Kung, Tai Chi was taken essentially from Taoism, then it was influenced by Buddhist meditation as mentioned. Tai Chi is a symbol of the Tao--the Yin and Yang symbol within a circle.⁴³ In Tai Chi, the Yin and Yang components work together in harmony since Tai Chi "integrates the body and mind, breathing and movement, hands and feet. The whole body becomes integrated and can move as one."⁴⁴ Many Taoists have developed Tai Chi and meditation from the idea, "the soft [Yin] overcomes the hard [Yang],"⁴⁵ of Tao Te Ching. For example, San Feng Chang used the ideas of the relaxation and the fighting of the snake and the bird for Tai Chi and meditation. Tai Chi principle also makes use of Tao Te Ching.

At birth, a man is soft and weak--yet capable of living the whole life ahead of him. At death, he is hard and tough--yet unable to live for even a minute longer. All things, whether plants or animals, while living, are soft and weak, but, when dead, are hard and tough. Thus hardness and toughness are allied with death, while softness and weakness are interrelated with life.⁴⁶

⁴² Lie, 13. From now on I use "Tai Chi" to indicate the Yang style particularly.

⁴³ Galante, 13.

⁴⁴ Liu, 146.

⁴⁵ Liu, 12.

⁴⁶ Quoted in Bahm, 65.

Tai Chi is the physiological expression of Taoism in the human body.⁴⁷ Tai Chi has uninterrupted movements, without pause from the beginning to the end. In this idea Tai Chi movements reflect the I Ching teaching that the world is continuously in movement. Finally, the Tai Chi principle is the mind directing the movement of the body, rather than the strength of the muscles: “The mind directs the Chi and the Chi mobilizes the body.”⁴⁸ In this way Tai Chi encourages the flow of the Chi to all parts of the body, including the smallest cavities and the bones.

In Tai Chi practice, Tai Chi movements can be expressed in different forms. I will not describe in detail each form since there are many good books written on this topic.⁴⁹ Master Liu mentions that the function of Tai Chi movement is to guide the breathing and the blood circulation so that the vital energy can flow through the body and have a beneficial effect.⁵⁰ Likewise, Tai Chi movement encourages the flow of the Chi to every part of the body. The different postures in Tai Chi are designed to benefit the different internal organs. For example, “Brush knee” helps the digestion of the stomach. The “Single Whip” is designed to help the lungs.⁵¹

Normally, there are two stages of practicing Tai Chi. The first stage is to learn the form, to remember it and to do it correctly. The second stage is to relax, to breathe

⁴⁷ Galante, 38.

⁴⁸ Liu, 121.

⁴⁹ Some of these books are: T'ai Chi Chuan and Meditation by Da Liu; Tai Chi: the Supreme Ultimate by Lawrence Galante; and Tai Chi Ch'uan by Foen Tjoeng Lie.

⁵⁰ Liu, 16.

⁵¹ Galante, 64.

comfortably and to be aware by using one's mind to direct the Chi throughout one's body as one performs the form. Grandmaster Kit says that if the Tai Chi movements are fast and forced, the energy will not flow smoothly. Thus, one should not use the strength of the muscles to perform Tai Chi movements. Tai Chi movements are usually performed slowly and gently. Its movements should be calm, even, flexible, comfortable and continuous, flowing as a long river, allowing the energy to flow freely and fluently.⁵²

Combination of Chi Kung and Tai Chi Practice

The relationship between Chi Kung and Tai Chi movements should reflect the interweaving of Yin and Yang theory. Chi Kung, which involves sitting or standing quietly, is Yin--the black fish. Tai Chi, essentially a form of movement, is Yang--the white fish. Liu emphasizes that the theory of the alternation of Yin and Yang is coordinated with the principles of Chi Kung (meditation) and Tai Chi, "After practicing Tai Chi for a long time, one should rest and practice meditation [Chi Kung]. Then, after becoming very quiet through meditation, one should practice the movements of Tai Chi once again to stimulate the blood circulation, release physical stagnation, and relax the mind."⁵³ In my experience, in the morning, practicing Chi Kung first then Tai Chi can help one to have a clear mind. At night practicing Tai Chi first then Chi Kung can help one to have a good sleep.

⁵² Kit, 99.

⁵³ Liu, 8.

General Methods to Gain Chi in Chi Kung and Tai Chi

As I mentioned above, Chi is the life energy, the foundation of all life. Chi is for meditation, for healing, health, and longevity. Thus, Chi is essential in Taoist practices. Indeed, Chi must be experienced in the body rather than found in words and explanation.

Taoist practitioners experience that Chi provides a healthy body and healthy mind. A healthy body includes muscle tone, coordination and energy. Taoist practices can provide a good sleep, a good digestive system and a good circulatory system. Master Foen Lie says "People with many years of Tai Chi Chuan experience show a much more efficient heart function, have lower blood pressure and suffer less often from arteriosclerosis when compared to people without Tai Chi Chuan experience."⁵⁴

Chi contributes to a healthy mind. A healthy mind involves concentration and calmness. Lie also says that "Tai Chi Chuan represents one of the best means for promoting mental calmness and the ability of looking within, of becoming one with oneself."⁵⁵ Lie explains further about the effects of Tai Chi. There were eighty people, between the ages of fifty to eighty-nine, who were examined by the Research Institute for Sport Medicine, in Peking, China. Thirty-two of them had long experience in the practice of Tai Chi, the rest had none. The research showed that people with an active involvement in Tai Chi were in far better shape. "Their heart and circulatory function, their breathing and metabolic function, as well as the strength of their bone structure were

⁵⁴ Lie, 118.

⁵⁵ Lie, 120.

far superior to those who did not pursue any physical activity other than their every day normal routine.”⁵⁶

Similarly, Master Wong Kit used the Chi Kung method (a distant Chi transmitted from Malaysia to Australia) to heal a woman who was going blind. After a few months of distant Chi transmission, her eyes were healed completely.⁵⁷ Furthermore, Kit says that Chi Kung is like preventive medicine. When one practices Chi Kung, one experiences at the same time both its preventive and its curative functions. If one has a disease, Chi Kung will cure it; if not, Chi Kung will promote one’s health and longevity.⁵⁸ For example, if one gently exhales onto an injured part of the body, like blowing “shssss” onto a wound, one would be able to relieve the pain.⁵⁹ In short, Taoist practices can provide Chi for a healthy body and a healthy mind, and for healing and longevity. To gain the best benefits in Taoist practices, it is necessary to follow some general principles which I will explain.

Relaxation. To gain Chi, one needs to relax one’s body and mind totally. One should neither force their breathing nor think during Taoist practices. One should let go of all thoughts with complete detachment. This is why Laotsu advises “wu-wei”--effortlessness.

⁵⁶ Lie, 116.

⁵⁷ Kit, 26.

⁵⁸ Kit, 40.

⁵⁹ Kit, 5.

Smiling is a way to relax the muscles of one's body. Master Mantak Chia says that smiling is the best medicine. Smiling makes the blood flow while it exercises the lungs and relieves tension and stress. That is why one feels good when smiling.⁶⁰ Buddha's smile is a good example. His lips touch each other lightly in a smile.

Another way to relax is to perform Chi Kung and Tai Chi slowly. For example, Tai Chi is usually performed slowly and gently. If the movements are fast and forced, Chi will not flow smoothly.⁶¹ If one breathes slowly and deeply from the abdomen, one's mind becomes relaxed and tranquil.

The modern world has accelerated its demands and pressures and more people need to find a quiet place to relax and to avoid breaking down. Laotsu says, "The still is the master of the unrest," and "Remain still and allow the natural action to arise by itself."⁶²

Awareness or mindfulness. Awareness means to watch with an alert mind. Buddhist meditation has greatly influenced Taoist practices with its method of awareness. According to Buddha, to be fully aware is to be fully alive, and the present moment is the only time one can practice awareness. One man asked Buddha, "I have heard of a doctrine of enlightenment. What is its method?" Buddha answered that when he walked he was aware of the fact that he walked, when he ate or drank he was aware of the fact that he ate or drank. However, many people walk, eat and drink and they are not aware of

⁶⁰ Mantak Chia, Awaken Healing Energy through the Tao (Santa Fe, N. Mex.: Aurora Press, 1983), 17.

⁶¹ Kit, 99.

⁶² Quoted in Eo Omwake, "Seeking the Straight in the Curved," T'ai Chi, Feb. 1992, 23.

what they do.⁶³ In the same way, Nhat Hanh Thich says breathing in a long breath, one is aware that “I am breathing in a long breath,” and breathing out a long breath one is aware that “I am breathing out a long breath.”⁶⁴

When one becomes aware of the mind’s wandering, one should be patient and bring the mind back in order to be mindful of one thing. To be mindful of one thing such as counting numbers or breathing is to build up the Chi of the body. Since the mind is always occupied, it is impossible to have a thoughtless state. When one is aware of one’s thoughts, thoughts tend to stop by themselves. Mumonkan, a zen koan says: “Every day master Zuigan Shigen would call out to himself, ‘Oh, Master’ and would answer himself, ‘Yes.’ ‘Are you awake?’ he would ask, and would answer, ‘Yes, I am.’ ‘Never be deceived by others, any day, any time.’ ‘No, I will not.’”⁶⁵ Master Zuigan Shigen tries to remind himself that to be fully aware is to be fully alive. In the same way, as a first step to being fully alive, one should put one’s whole mind and heart into each breath. The quality of focusing awareness on each breath produces much more energy than the length of time in practice without focusing awareness at all.⁶⁶

Being aware of all thoughts means to have no bias, to accept them as they are, like a mirror’s reflection. Being aware of all thoughts and feelings means to let them come and to let them go without attachment to them. There is no judgment regarding the

⁶³ See Edward Stevens, Spiritual Technologies (New York: Paulist Press, 1990), 50.

⁶⁴ Nhat Hanh Thich, Breathe! You Are Alive, trans. Annabel Laity (Berkeley, Calif.: Parallax Press, 1990), 6. Nhat Hanh Thich is a Vietnamese Buddhist monk.

⁶⁵ Quoted in William Johnston, The Mirror Mind (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980), 62.

⁶⁶ Kit. 118. Many extraneous thoughts frequently intrude and a practitioner needs to be perseverant to re-focus one’s breathing with awareness of the mind.

morality or immorality of the thoughts and feelings. Finally, being aware means not searching for solutions.

In Taoist practices, the function of the mind is for awareness of thoughts and feelings and whatever is happening at the present moment. Many Chi Kung masters agree that the Chi is guided by the mind; the mind is the commander of the Chi. It directs the Chi and the Chi mobilizes the body. Mencius, a Confucian philosopher, says, "Our will power can control the flow of energy. When we think of a certain organ or area of our body, energy flows to that part."⁶⁷ Thus, the role of the *mind* is even *more* important than the movements of Tai Chi. Chuang Tsu advises that one should use one's mind to carry the vital energy along the Government Vessel (a channel in the body which runs along the spinal column, from the coccyx bone up through the neck to the skull and over the crown of the head to the roof of the mouth) to keep one's body healthy.⁶⁸ It means that the mind controls the Chi of the body.

Breathing. Forceful breathing often constricts the flow of Chi. Breathing should be naturally comfortable, slow, gentle, steady, silent and deep so that the incoming cosmic energy can fill one's energy center at the abdomen.⁶⁹ One famous Oriental master said to his disciples, "Your breathing is your greatest friend. Return to it in all your troubles and you will find comfort and guidance."⁷⁰ Thich emphasizes the importance of breathing,

⁶⁷ Quoted in Kit, 10.

⁶⁸ Liu, 16.

⁶⁹ Kit, 9.

⁷⁰ Quoted in De Mello, 24.

“Breathing is a means of awakening and maintaining full attention in order to look carefully, long, and deeply, to see the nature of all things, and arrive at liberation.”⁷¹ Likewise, Ko Hung, the author of Po Pu Tze, says that breathing techniques can prolong life and prevent disease.⁷² From the air, we breathe in oxygen and many other elements such as magnesium, iron, copper, zinc, fluorite, quartz. These elements supply the needs of the body. Taoist practices provide efficient and effective methods for taking in these healthy elements and getting rid of wastes and poison. These methods are what Chuang Tsu says, “Expel the old, take in the new.”⁷³ In Taoist practices, breathing in and out by the nose is recommended since the nose contains hairs to filter and clean the air before it comes to the lungs. Finally, one can combine breathing and mantra (repeating words). Repeating words with mindfulness calms the mind and helps the mind to concentrate on one thing. Practitioners can repeat a mantra such as “Om Mani Padme Hum.”

Breathing in the Taoist practices is often focused at “Tan Tien.” The Tan Tien is located about one and one-half inches below the navel. Here one can store Chi and strengthen Chi. Here one can unify body, mind and spirit.⁷⁴ Deep breathing at the Tan Tien can stimulate the internal organs and the nervous systems. If practitioners focus their breathing here, they gain energy and are cured of all kinds of diseases.⁷⁵ Breathing in the

⁷¹ Thich, 22.

⁷² Liu, 53.

⁷³ Quoted in Liu, 49.

⁷⁴ Mantak Chia and Maneewan Chia, Chi Nei Tsang, ed. David Flatley (Huntington, N. Y.: Healing Tao Books, 1990), 29.

⁷⁵ Takahashi and Brown, 61.

Taoist practices is easy and natural. Laotsu recommends breathing at the navel just as a child does. Laotsu says, “Empty the heart, fill the abdomen.” It means that practitioners need to relax and empty their mind and heart of all thoughts. They breathe gently and deeply so that the cosmos’ energy can fill their vital energy at the abdomen.⁷⁶ Again, the important point is that practitioners should not force their breathing, but learn to relax in order to allow the chi to flow freely through all organs of their body for a healthy body and a healthy mind.

Regular practice. I Ching emphasizes the importance of regular practice by saying, “Heaven moves steadily, so should man exercise himself regularly.”⁷⁷ By constant practice, Chi accumulates gradually. Daily practice also prevents disease. The Yellow Emperor says: “Maintaining order rather than correcting disorder is the ultimate principle of wisdom.”⁷⁸

Postures of Taoist practices. Practitioners should relax the whole body without any tension or force. Cheng Man Ching, the contemporary master says that the back should form a straight line with the backbone perpendicular to the ground. “The spine is the main bone of the body and is made up of many joints. . . .It must be held plumb erect and the top of the head should be as if suspended from above.”⁷⁹ Paying attention to the waist as it turns is necessary for Taoist practices since the waist is where the power comes

⁷⁶ Quoted in Kit, 9.

⁷⁷ Quoted in John Kotsias, The Essential Movements of T'ai Chi (Brookline, Mass.: Paradigm Publications, 1989), 120.

⁷⁸ Quoted in Mantak Chia and Maneewan Chia, Awaken Healing Light of the Tao, ed. Judith Stein (Huntington, N. Y.: Healing Tao Books, 1994), 496.

⁷⁹ Quoted in Omwake, 23.

from. Eyes should be open but not too wide. The mouth should be closed and the lips should touch each other lightly for a smile. The tongue should lightly touch the roof of the mouth. The shoulders should be always dropped down to relax. The arms should be bent at the elbows and the elbows should also be held low and relaxed. Wearing loose clothes and a loose belt can also be helpful for the Chi to flow more easily in the body.

Place. Moreover, proper conditions for Taoist practices are important for health. For example, practitioners need a quiet place and a lot of trees and grass, since fresh air is recommended. To have clean air, practitioners can use burning incense to drive away bad odors. The place should not be too cold or too hot since a comfortable temperature is needed. The place should not be too light or too dark. There should be no pets nearby and the place should also contain cushions or pillows on which to sit comfortably.

Time. The best time for practice is 11 p.m.-1 a.m. However, early morning is effective too. A fifteen minutes practice session is recommended; especially for beginners who can practice one to three times a day.⁸⁰ It is desirable to have an empty stomach should be empty for one or two hours before practice since a full stomach interferes with the flow of energy, as well as interfering with breathing. Thus, one should not practice when one has a full stomach or is very hungry or thirsty.

⁸⁰ Liu, 80.

When a practitioner is too tired, that person should not practice since one might fall asleep; however, one can recover from a little weariness by Tao practices. One should not practice when one has a high fever, a bad cold, or serious diarrhea. Finally, one should not practice while one is hurried or too anxious.⁸¹

Summary

In Taoist practice, practitioners should be relaxed and aware. Relaxation and awareness are the two most important principles in Chi Kung and Tai Chi. The combining of Chi Kung and Tai Chi for developing the Chi provides balance. The Chi is the vital energy for health, healing, and longevity. The development of Chi through a balanced program of both meditation and Tai Chi exercises gives physical and mental health. The harmony engendered is the gateway to a strong spirituality and the essential connection with Tao. The disciplined practice of Tao promotes a holistic well-being of mind and body.

⁸¹ Takahashi and Brown, 44.

Chapter 4

Complimentarity of Ignatian Prayer and Taoist Meditation

for the Greater Glory of God

What I say to you, I say to all: Be on guard! (Mk 13: 37)

Dialogue between Eastern and Western Meditation

God is not concerned primarily with Christianity, but with humanity. All religions need to work together for the well-being of the world and all religions need to join hands to fight against injustice and violence in the world. In this way, they can serve the poor and the suffering.¹ Members of different religions need to understand and respect one another without imposing themselves on one another. Jesus prays, "I have given them the glory you gave me that they may be one, as we are one--I living in them, you living in me--that their unity may be complete" (Jn 17:22-23). This verse applies to religious traditions as well as to individuals.

God can be best be understood through knowing and through the experience of many religions; each religion brings an additional unique perspective of God. For example, Scripture is like a finger pointing to the moon. God is the moon. We should not get so involved with examining the finger that we overlook the moon.² Indeed, although we all are members of many different communities (for example: a family, a working community, a neighborhood community, a religious community), we are, ultimately, all

¹ Hakan Eilert, "Journey through the Gateless Gate," in Spirituality in Interfaith Dialogue, eds. Tosh Arai and Wesley Ariarajah (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1989), 93.

² William Johnston, Christian Zen, rev. ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979), 50.

members of a greater whole--the world community. Very often we choose to focus only on our own religion and fail to see ourselves as part of this greater community.

The Second Vatican Council mentions that Christians are still “seekers, members of a pilgrim Church, and so we can join hands with other searchers, whether they be Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, or anything else, in our common quest for truth.”³ We can join hands with others since God lives and acts in all races and “all are one” in Christ (1 Cor 12). The Second Vatican Council also says, “no serious theologian doubts the goodness of non-Christians.”⁴ Thus, we as seekers can enrich our spiritual insight through the practices of other religious traditions.⁵ The ecumenical meetings between Eastern and Western meditation groups have been increasing. Religious leaders have come to know each other better and to respect each others’ ways of meditation.⁶ Paul Tillich, John Hick and Wilfred Cantwell Smith encourage the dialogue among religions, to appreciate one another more deeply for the well-being of the world.⁷

In this vein, Western and Eastern people can come to have a mutual understanding through Ignatian prayer practices and Taoist practices. This chapter will explore how Ignatian spirituality and Taoist philosophy are similar to and different from one another in both their theory and their practice, and how the two streams compliment each other for

³ Quoted in Johnston, Christian Zen, 10.

⁴ Quoted in Johnston, Mirror Mind, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980), 16.

⁵ Johnston, Christian Zen, 44.

⁶ Johnston, Mirror Mind, 1.

⁷ Paul Clasper, Eastern Paths and the Christian Way (Maryknoll, N. Y.: Orbis Books, 1980), 117.

enlarging our spiritual lives.⁸ Previously, I have presented the assumptions of the two streams which pay mutual respect to each other. They compliment each other in forming a more congenial spiritual wholeness. Now I would like to discuss these assumptions in relation to each other. I write as a Christian with a Christian purpose: for Christians to adopt these two streams.

Similarities in Theory

Ignatian spirituality and Taoist philosophy can be held together like the Yin and the Yang. Though bearing distinct differences, the two are complimentary to each other. When woven together, a beautiful whole is created incorporating the beauties of each while sustaining their distinctness. I suggest ten stitches in the weaving of these two traditions into a Yin-Yang whole.

The first stitch in this weaving is that the God in Ignatian prayer practices and the Tao in Taoist practices have the same function--creating the world. Tao can be expressed by many names: Brahman, God, Ultimate Being, Super Being.⁹ In fact, all religions aim at the same goal--what Christians call, "God."¹⁰ As Christians, we affirm that God creates the world. Creation is the key point and this Spirit of God sustains creation--Spiritus Creator. Likewise, everything from the cosmos comes from Tao. With the divine energy, Tao produces all things. Tao produces the components, Yin and Yang. The dynamic of Yin and Yang produces heaven, earth and living beings, which produces five elements,

⁸ I would like to emphasize that, for Christians, the two streams are only a means to love God, to glorify God, and to unify with God.

⁹ Kit, 115.

¹⁰ Kit, 138.

four seasons and thousands of things.¹¹ Taoist practitioners can imitate Tao and unify with Tao.

The second stitch in weaving Ignatian spirituality with Taoist philosophy lies in the notions of the “Spirit of God” and “Chi.” The Spirit of God is working in the world and can be expressed as “fire” and “breath.” This Spirit can transform the life of flesh to the life of spirit, ignorance and inordinate desire to the life of the spirit, bearing the fruits of gentleness, kindness, compassion and respectfulness toward others. In the same way, Chi can be translated as “spirit” or “divine energy.”¹² Chi can be expressed by the breath and the body feeling warm. The Chi of an individual is associated with the Chi in the universe, as the Yellow Emperor mentioned.¹³ Chi activates all things and makes change. It can transform the disharmonious life to the harmonious life. So, the Spirit of God, or Chi, has an important role in directing all things in the world.

The third stitch in weaving Ignatian spirituality with Taoist philosophy is “trusting” and “relaxation.” Christians rely on God’s power to fight against their inordinate desires. They rely on God’s power so that they can bear their pain with joy and peace. Taoist exercises train us to relax, to let things come and to let things go freely. For example, in Taoist breathing, practitioners drop all of their anxiety so that they can focus on their breathing. Laotsu recommends that we imitate a child, since the attitude of a child is trusting. Likewise, Christians trust in God and let God handle their lives. Jesus says, “I

¹¹ The five elements are fire, earth, metal, water, and wood. Four seasons of a year are spring, summer, fall, and winter. The five elements and four seasons are related to one another naturally.

¹² Frank Rogers has used the term “divine energy” to express the Chi which comes from Tao.

¹³ The Yellow Emperor, King Huang Ti, is discussed in Chap. 3.

tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the reign of God like a little child will never enter it” (Mk 10:15). Taoist practices help us to relax so that we can trust and be open to God’s will. In addition, Taoist practices train us to relax so that we can listen more attentively to God’s words. We need to relax and trust in God’s providence in order to let God’s grace fill our hearts. The more we trust in God, the more we relax. The more we relax, the easier we can pray. Consequently, we can have a deeper trust in God.

The fourth stitch of similarity is the Christian understanding of “humility” and the Taoist reference to “water.”

Nothing surpasses it, nothing equals it [water].
The principle that what is weak overcomes what is strong,
And what is yielding, conquers what is resistant.¹⁴

Like the humility of water, Jesus invited Christians to learn from him, one who was humble, poor and insulted (Mt 11:29 and Phil 2:5-11). Mary expressed her humility: “I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you say” (Lk 1:38). Similarly, humility and meekness are characteristics of water. It flows at the foot of mountains, but all the while it is patiently cutting through rocks. Water is always seeking the lowest place. The Colorado river has made the Grand Canyon this way. To live in harmony with nature is to imitate the humility of water. As Christians, we humbly admit that we are sinners but still loved by God. We also humbly ask God for help since we ourselves cannot do all things (Jn 15:5). We accept that we are creatures and God is above all things in the universe.

¹⁴ Bahm, 66.

The fifth stitch in weaving Ignatian spirituality with Taoism is “finding God in all things” and “awareness.” A prayerful person is one who can find God in ordinary things, at anytime, and anywhere. One can behold the beauty of a flower and come to believe that God manifests Godself through the beauty of the flower. In the same way, one comes to believe in God when one beholds a river, a tree, a dog, etc. We believe that all things in nature manifest the greatness of God. All creation comes to glorify the beauty, the goodness, the love and the power of God. This is very similar to the Taoist understanding of awareness.

Taoist practitioners try to be aware of everything, their breathing, sitting, eating, and walking. Likewise, Thomas Merton says that contemplation is nothing less than “life itself, fully awake, fully alive, fully aware that it is alive.”¹⁵ Being aware of everything is being alive, and to be fully aware is to be fully alive. St. Irenaeus says that the glory of God is a person who is fully alive.¹⁶ Taoist practices can sharpen our awareness. Christians can use Taoist practices for awareness of God’s presence from moment to moment. Jesus emphasizes, “Stay awake” and “Be on guard and pray that you may not be put to the test” (Mk13:32 and Mk 14:38). In the same way, St. Paul urges us: “You know that the Lord is coming like a thief in the night. Do not be asleep but aware and watchful for the Lord” (1 Thes 5:2, 6). In the same way, Jesus advises, “Do not be anxious about tomorrow. Let tomorrow take care of itself. Today has troubles enough of

¹⁵ Quoted in William H. Shannon, Thomas Merton’s Dark Path, (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1981), 150.

¹⁶ Kadowaki, 104.

its own” (Mt. 6:34). Jesus tells us clearly that we should drop all anxiety about the future so that we can live fully alive in the present moment.¹⁷ Jesus teaches us the gentle art of detachment--letting go of worrying about the future.

Taoist practices train practitioners to become more aware of each action in the present time. This kind of awareness can be helpful for our short prayers such as repeating a mantra and examen of consciousness, which deepen in us our awareness of the presence of God and our awareness of God’s love for us. A holy Christian is a person who tries to be mindful of God in all situations, anytime and anywhere, especially in the present situation at the present moment. Somehow, this kind of person can carry one’s burden, one’s work, however hard it is. This person tries to live one day at a time, living lovingly, compassionately, gently, kindly, sweetly, patiently and purely, from the morning until the sun goes down. This person has found the meaning of life in daily living.

The sixth stitch in weaving Ignatian spirituality with Taoism is “the indifferent attitude” and “detachment.” For union with God alone, Christians need to have an indifferent attitude. Detachment from inordinate desires is a precise characteristic of this indifference. Christians need this kind of detachment so that they may obtain joy and peace in the midst of their pain and difficulty. They need to have this detachment so that they can see things as they are; for example, to see who God is, who I am, and who other people are.

¹⁷ We can trust God by living fully at the present time. Indeed, when we are preoccupied about the future, we often feel anxious, worried, fearful and tense—harden our hearts to trust in God. Thus, living fully at the present time is a way to trust in God’s providence. Living fully at the present time is necessary for our peace and joy.

Considering how to deal with our disordinate desires, Master Suzuki says, “Just let them come and let them go. See them as if they belong to somebody else.”¹⁸ For example, Buddha left his beautiful palace for his mission.¹⁹ Likewise, Taoist practitioners seek to detach themselves from their disordinate desires so that they can unify with Tao. Thomas Merton describes the characteristic of a mirror:

The mirror is thoroughly egoless and mindless. If a flower comes, it reflects a flower, if a bird comes, it reflects a bird. It shows a beautiful object as beautiful, an ugly object as ugly. Everything is revealed as it is. There is no discriminating mind or self-consciousness on the part of the mirror. If something comes, the mirror reflects; if it disappears the mirror just lets it disappear.²⁰

The mirror has no attachment, unlike the monkeys being trapped because of their attachment to tasty nuts. The characteristic of the mirror is like the “indifferent attitude” of St. Ignatius. In the practice of “Discernment of Spirits”, Ignatius says that we need this “indifferent attitude” for making decisions, for doing God’s will, for union with God alone, since God alone can satisfy us. It means that in making a better choice to glorify God, we should not base our choice on our likes and dislikes. Rather, “we should keep ourselves indifferent.”²¹ Indifference requires us to make a decision to unite with God, to make our will one with God’s will. One can learn to detach from all gifts of God if they block one’s love for God, for example Peter and Andrew listened to Jesus’ call and they left their nets to follow him (Mk 1:18). In short, to glorify God, one needs to have an

¹⁸ Quoted in Johnston, Christian Zen, 112.

¹⁹ Kadowaki, 130.

²⁰ Quoted in Shannon, 199.

²¹ Quoted in Fleming, 25.

indifferent attitude, the detachment from one's greedy desires. This indifference is similar to the Taoist goal of detachment.

The seventh stitch of similarity is "change." Christians believe that we are pilgrims on the way home with and to God. Our spiritual life is to grow and to change. Thus, we make new decisions at each present situation since all things change according to the law of nature. All things flow freely and naturally. Human beings come and go. They are born and mature, they grow old and eventually die. In the same way, Taoist practitioners look at life as Yin and Yang movement. The dynamic of Yin and Yang make things change like the cycle of the four seasons: spring, summer, fall and winter. Likewise, all things, such as material goods and honor, are subject to change. Thus, to live is to change. This is the true reality whether human beings accept this idea or not. A flowing river is never the same. For example, the topic of my project has been changed several times for the better, from "Taoist Practices Used as Preparation for Ignatian Prayers," to "Ignatian Prayer Practices and Taoist Meditation Practices Compliment Each Other for the Greater Glory of God," then "Christian Tai Chi Meditation: An Awareness of God in All Things for the Greater Glory of God Through Ignatian and Taoist Practices," then "Christian Tai Chi Meditation: Cultivating Awareness of God in All Things through Ignatian and Taoist Practices." In short, all things evolve and change. Christians accept this law for their peace.

The eighth stitch of similarity is that all life contains two sides, and both sides are in balance with each other. First, every living thing bears two sides of the same coin. The sides of Yin and Yang complement each other, according to Taoism. The understanding

of this concept of Yin and Yang helps us see dimensions of Christian life which bear complementary balance. The Bible says, "There is . . . A time to be born, and a time to die. . . . A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance" (Eccl 3:1-4). Rainy days and sunny days follow each other. To show this idea more clearly, there is a Chinese story of an old farmer and his horse.

One day the farmer's horse ran away into the jungle. His neighbors sympathized with the farmer over his bad luck. The farmer said, "Bad luck? Good luck? Who knows?" A week later, the horse brought home several wild horses. His neighbors came to congratulate the farmer who only said, "Good luck? Bad luck? Who knows?" Then the farmer's son tried to ride on one of the wild horses. He fell and broke his legs. Everyone thought the accident to be bad luck, but the farmer said, "Bad luck? Good luck? Who knows?" Finally, a few months later, the government army came to the farmer's town. They drafted all the young people to go into battle, but they left the farmer's son alone because of his broken legs.²²

The idea of Yin and Yang complementing each other can be applied to Christian prayer. For example, prayer needs two elements: knowledge and love. The more we know Jesus, the more we love him and imitate him. Thus, "understanding plays an important role in prayer, since one cannot love what one does not know. One's love is in proportion to one's knowledge. At the same time, prayer is not mere reasoning or speculation about God."²³ Thus, Christian prayer needs both--the mind and the heart.

Furthermore, St. Paul says, "If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body" (1 Cor 15:44). The body and the mind are united as a whole. Likewise, the idea of two sides in Yin and Yang can also be applied to human relationships. Everyone has some good points and some bad points. This is a reality. No one is perfectly good, but all are

²² De Mello, 134.

²³ Green, Opening to God, 33.

sinners in the Christian point of view. Thus, to accept people as they are, is a way to live in harmony with oneself and with one another. The final point for the existence of two sides of the same coin is about mutual love: God loves us and in return we may have the power to love God.

In addition, the concept of balance in Yin and Yang suggests that when something goes up to the maximum, it will also go down in order to keep the universe in harmony and order. This is also the law of nature according to Taoism, as mentioned in chapter three. The phenomenon of the balance of Yin and Yang happens when Yin becomes extreme, it will turn into Yang and vice versa. This is reflected in the saying of Jesus, “Whoever exalts oneself shall be humbled, but whoever humbles oneself shall be exalted” (Mt 23:12). In this way, God confuses the proud and exalts the humble. God’s power fills the humble person such as Mary, the mother of Jesus: “For he has looked upon his servant in her lowliness; all ages to come shall call me blessed” (Lk 1:48).

The concept of balance in Yin and Yang can also be expressed in the rules of “Discernment of spirits” of Ignatius. To deal with feelings of consolation, one should be humble enough to remember how weak one was without God’s grace. To deal with feelings of desolation, one should remember how God loved and supported that person in the past.

The ninth stitch involves creation and “nature.” The Christian point of view about nature is that God’s beauty and goodness manifests itself through nature such as flowers, rivers, mountains and all kinds of animals: “God dwells in creatures; in the elements giving them existence, in the plants giving them life, in the animals conferring upon them

sensation; and in man bestowing understanding” (Ignatian Exercise #324). Likewise, according to Taoism, to live in harmony with the Tao means to live in harmony with the law of nature. This law can be expressed as follows. Because of God’s expressing beauty and glory in and through nature, the Taoist principle of living in harmony with nature is in some real sense living in harmony with God.

To live in harmony with nature means to accept the reality of nature. For example, accepting the reality of the cycle of the four seasons is to live in peace and harmony with nature. In daily living, the Taoist practitioners try to live close to nature, like a farmer who is near to plants, mountains, and rivers. To live in harmony with nature means to relax, to let go. To live in harmony with nature also means to imitate a child in trusting both nature and God. Finally, to live in harmony with nature means to imitate the characteristic of water--its humility, as mentioned.

The tenth stitch in the weaving of Ignatian spirituality with Taoism is “loving service.” Ignatius emphasized that to be holy, Christians should love and serve God in all things, since this kind of love “ought to show itself in deeds over and above words.”²⁴ This loving service has a social dimension, since we are in relation with one another. As pilgrims, we need our families, friends and benefactors to help us on the way home to and with God. Indeed, no one can live happily by oneself in society, and there is no one on earth without some trouble or affliction. In the same manner, the Taoist way of living is to be compassionate, gentle and kind toward others. To explain this Taoist way, we need to remember that Taoist practices have been influenced by three sources: Buddhism,

²⁴ Quoted in Fleming, 87.

Confucianism and Taoism. In living, Buddhism emphasizes the practice of being compassionate toward other beings. In living, Confucianism emphasizes the practice of being gentle and kind to others. In living, Taoism emphasizes the practice of being one with the universe, living in harmony with one another since all is one.²⁵ Chuang Tsu says, “The Cosmos and I live on forever. All things and I are united as one.”²⁶ This is likewise the Christian point of view that loving others is loving God. Serving others is serving God. Being gentle and kind to others is being gentle and kind to God. Our acts of love and holiness toward others is evidence of our love for God (Mt 25). We show our love, compassion and understanding to others so that they might see our good deeds in order to praise and glorify God.

Similarities in Practice

As shown above, the two streams of Christianity and Taoism have ten similar stitches in theory. These stitches suggest how the similarities of Ignatian prayer and Taoist meditation might compliment each other for the holistic well-being of humanity. Ignatian spirituality and Taoism also have six similar unifying stitches at the level of practice. First, both Ignatian prayer and Taoist meditation require constant practice: we learn by doing. Thus, prayer, discernment of spirits and loving service can be learned by experience. They cannot be proved by reason alone. In fact, the right understanding of them cannot guarantee us happiness if we lack the will power to practice constantly. Ignatius, in Exercise #46, recommends constant prayer. In this sense, our daily prayer

²⁵ Hutchison, 246-53.

²⁶ Quoted in Kit, 127.

becomes an act of honoring God, an act of love, an act of praise and glorification to God. Likewise, Taoism emphasizes that practice as an art of harmonious living needs constant effort.

A second stitch in the weaving is the practice of meditation of a mantra. Ignatius describes a mantric prayer (Exercises #258-#260) that helps Christians deepen and focus their heart in God. When Christians pray in this way, they should keep the same rhythm in breathing in and out for each mantric word, such as “Jesus,” or “God.” Similarly, in Taoist meditation Buddhists offer the sacred words, “Om Mani Padme Hum.”²⁷ One needs to repeat these sacred words with awareness, with reverence, with fidelity and a sincerity of heart in order to go deeply within and to maintain focus. Christians can fix their minds and hearts on God, to praise and glorify God all the time by constantly repeating the mantric word.

A third stitch is “silence.” In Chi Kung and Tai Chi, one should do all movements slowly in order to be silent, to be quiet and calm. Thus, Taoist practices can be a means for us to attain the relaxation, stillness and calmness that are necessary for our prayers. Taoist practices can be a means to help us be quiet so that we can listen to God’s voice. In fact, we can sit silently with faith and hope if we believe that God loves us and takes care of us. We can let go of our plans since we rely on God’s power and providence, “Be still and know I am God” (Ps 46:10). St. John of the Cross also says, “In order to attain to a deep mystical experience, you must quiet all movements of the senses.”²⁸ Similarly,

²⁷ See Hutchison, 145. “Om Mani Padme Hum” means “The jewel is in the lotus.” It also means that the mind is supported by the compassion of the heart.

²⁸ Quoted in Kadowaki, 89.

Tao Te Ching says, “Who can make the muddy water clear? Let it be still, and it will gradually become clear,”²⁹ and “The still is the master of the unrest. Remain still and allow the natural action to arise by itself.”³⁰ Likewise, Thomas Merton says that the key to contemplation is silence.³¹ We need silence to quiet down since our daily life is filled with the hustle and bustle of life and its noise.

Coming to pray in the Taoist way means simply facing God in silence. Like contemplation, Taoist practices can calm the noise in our mind and help us be more open to God’s voice in stillness. We come to pray in stillness and calmness, like a mirror, so that we can listen to God’s voice more clearly. Especially in Ignatian retreats, we do everything slowly in order to remain in solitude. We read Scriptures slowly so that the words of God can sink into our hearts. We eat slowly so that we can enjoy our meal. We walk slowly so that we can behold nature dwelling around us. In general, we need to *slow down* our movements in Ignatian prayer practices as well as in Taoist practices. Slowing down our actions is the first step for silence of the heart. From this kind of silence, we can improve the art of listening to God’s words and discerning God’s will for us.

The fourth stitch is “community support.”³² Communal prayer can be a powerful way to support one another. When Christians sincerely pray together, they build up their bond of love and service to one another. In this context, when a prayer group gathers

²⁹ Quoted in Liu, v.

³⁰ Quoted in Omwake, 23.

³¹ See Shannon, 199.

³² In a pure sense Taoist practice is for an individual; however, it has been influenced by Confucism and Buddhism which emphasize the importance of community. For example, “sangha” is Buddhist word for community. See Mirror Mind by William Johnston.

together, Christ is in their midst: “Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst” (Mt 18:20). Likewise, when Taoist practitioners sincerely practice together, the divine energy in the universe generates to them and makes them united with one another—all is one. They become more sensitive to the needs of others. They become more compassionate, gentler and kinder toward one another. When a group practices Chi Kung and Tai Chi, the members build up Chi together. This Chi can support, strengthen and heal each member for a healthy body and a healthy mind.

The fifth stitch is “the need for a director.” Christians need spiritual directors to guide them in their prayer, in spiritual discernment and in loving service to others. Ignatius mentions that with the Spirit of God and with the guidance of a spiritual director, a retreatant can listen to God’s will authentically. In the same way, Taoist practitioners need an instructor for guidance, especially for beginners. In fact, many eastern religious traditions place a strong emphasis on the student-teacher relationship such as that of guru and disciple. This relationship illustrates the students’ humility and willingness to learn from the instructor. Without an instructor, students do not know the proper movements that they need to practice. Sometimes, it would be harmful to them to practice wrongly. For example, during the practice of Taoist breathing they can get a headache if they think too much, or are too anxious. The instructor constantly needs to remind them to be aware and to relax, to “let things come, let things go.” Likewise, to improve in Ignatian prayer, Christians need guidance so that they can walk in the light of Christ rather than walking in the darkness of evil-doing.

The sixth stitch is “the function of human breath.” The Bible says that breath is the Spirit of God that Jesus breathes on his disciples (Jn 20:22). Through Jesus’ breath, his disciples receive love, joy, peace and strength. We recall further that in Genesis, God creates us through God’s own breath. In Ezekiel, God breathes on the dry bones of Israel and gives them life.³³ Thus, the presence of God is like the air we breathe. The Spirit of God is within us, in the air we breathe. The existence of human beings depend simply upon breath sustained by God. Thus, without air we die. It is in God that we live, breathe, move, and have our being (Acts 17:28). St. John of the Cross cries out:

And in Your sweet breathing
Filled with good and glory,
How tenderly You swell my heart with love.³⁴

In the same way, breath in the Taoist point of view is a symbol for life. Breath is like a bridge to connect the body and the mind. Breath or the air relates living beings with the cosmos.

In summary, Ignatian spirituality and Taoist practices have many similar points in theory, as well as in practice. The practice of both Ignatian prayer and Taoist meditation approach and glorify God. Thus, Christians need not fear Taoist practices. These practices can help us as a means to love God and to glorify God. There are many ways of approaching God. Each of them can be a way leading us to God. Any method can become an idol, but we must be open to learning from each other. However, we must not forget that Taoism and Christianity are from different traditions. There are some distinct differences in both theory and practice which we will now describe.

³³ Johnston, Christian Zen, 58.

³⁴ Quoted in Johnston, Mirror Mind, 57.

Differences in Theory

There are two significant differences in theory. The first point of difference is between “a personal God” and an “impersonal Tao.” Christians believe in Christ as a personal God who loves, cares and died for them. The way to God is in Christ Jesus: “No one can come to the Father except through me. . . . To have seen me is to have seen the Father” (Jn 14: 6-9). This personal God is a faithful God who is always present in our good times as well as our bad times. Christians feel close to this kind of God. We can imitate and identify ourselves with the God/man, Jesus.

On the other hand, Laotsu recommended that people should live in harmony with Tao, willing to imitate Tao as an impersonal, “powerful God.” Although Taoism and Christianity differ on the point of the personal-impersonal aspect of God, both systems present workable practices. It seems interesting that whether we accept a personal or an impersonal God, those who adhere to either system still have to obey God.

The second point of difference is between “faith in this personal God” and “trusting in oneself.” Christians center on and are grounded in God, like the story about the young man and the Indian king, as mentioned in chapter two. Faith in this personal God is resting in God as a baby sleeping in the mother’s arms. Christians believe that everyone needs spiritual food such as love, peace, and joy that only God can give: “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth” (1 Cor 3:6). Moreover, Christians admit that we are sinners. We cannot save ourselves, but Jesus can (Jn 14:6 and Acts 4:12). In addition, we can bear our suffering with joy in the midst of our pain and affliction since we believe in God-man, Jesus--we even will to accept our pain for Christ.

We believe that our cross is temporary in this changing world. Thus, we rely on God's grace for bearing our suffering on the way to God. We rely on the movements of the Spirit of God to lead our lives in this changing world.

On the other hand, Taoists trust in themselves. There is no need for supernatural aid or grace. They believe that they can achieve health, longevity and immortality by their own effort. The Taoists rely on their own effort. They focus on the mind to visualize, to think of, and to feel the energy flowing inside and outside of themselves.

Because of our different attitudes, we have faith in a personal God and Taoists trust in themselves. There are different ways for Christians and Taoists. Christians follow the guidance of the Spirit of God and Taoists follow the guidance of their minds. In discernment of spirits, we need to believe and listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit in order to discern and follow God's will for the present situation. In Taoist practices, however, practitioners focus on the minds, since Taoists believe that the mind is the primary force of the universe.³⁵ Practitioners use the minds to guide the Chi in their bodies for a healthy body and a healthy mind. Christians, however, try to do our best and leave the rest to God since we believe that we, ourselves, cannot do everything perfectly. I would like to emphasize that Christians need both divine grace and human effort for effective prayer and spiritual growth. It means that we can use our minds to strengthen our bodies, and at the same time, we can ask the Spirit of God to guide us in walking in the light of Christ. In short, observing the two different methods, I think that it is necessary for Christians to rely on God's power; however, we need to use our minds, as God's gift for us, to our

³⁵ Kit, 115.

fullest capacity to glorify God in all things. In fact, the difference regarding human effort is not problematic as long as it is grounded in an understanding of God's grace.

Differences in Practice

Christianity and Taoism bear differences at the level of theory; they also bear different ways at the level of practice. I will focus on two dimensions of practice, neglected in Christianity, that Taoism contributes. The first point of difference is "physical health." Ignatius said little about how to take care of the body. He said that retreatants should be careful in their fasting so that they do not get sick because then they cannot pray well (Exercise # 213). However, "health" is the primary focus for Taoist practitioners: "If essence [healthy body] is full, energy [for work and play] is plentiful, and if energy is plentiful, mind is rich."³⁶

According to Taoism, good health requires a balance between Yin and Yang forces within the body.³⁷ Taoist practice can help that Christians enlarge their spiritual life to have a healthy body and a healthy mind. Of course, sick people can pray and should pray; however, it is more difficult for the sick to concentrate on their prayers. If one does not have good health, one has a difficult time doing well in anything; especially in the spiritual discernment area. A sick body influences one's mind and feelings. Taoist practices can provide good health for more effective prayer. Taoist practices can also be a tool for healing, as in some cases mentioned earlier. God is a perfect healer. Of course, God can heal us physically, emotionally and spiritually. However, God wants us to be healed by many ways. These ways can include Eastern methods of healing.

³⁶ Kit, 114.

³⁷ Liu, 5.

The second point of difference is “posture in meditation.” Postures are important in Taoist practices, as well as in Ignatius’ methods of prayer. Ignatius recommends retreatants to choose whatever posture with which they feel most comfortable and alert (for example: lying, sitting, standing, kneeling).³⁸ Postures in Ignatian prayers are simple; however postures in Taoist practices are much more complex and graceful in their movements. In Taoist practices, proper postures in sitting, in standing, and in movements are necessary to obtain the chi. Like Ignatius’ experience, I would like to recommend that one should choose whatever posture in which one feels comfortable and alert for Ignatian prayer practices as well as for Taoist meditation practices. Particularly, the Taoist practice can contribute to the effectiveness of prayer. Taoist practice helps us become more aware of God’s presence in our breathing. The proper posture in Chi Kung and Tai Chi is necessary for genuine prayer.

Integration of Ignatian Prayer and Taoist Meditation

Before integrating the two streams, I will summarize some main aspects of Ignatian prayer practices and of Taoist meditation practices in order to highlight that the glory of God can be seen in both streams. The focus of Ignatian prayer is God, with faith in God through Jesus Christ, relying on God’s power through the Spirit. When we seek to see God in all things, we are glorifying God. Christians can find God in many ways, especially in prayer, (Examen of Consciousness, and mantra), in discernment of spirits (indifference--where detachment from idols is the key rule for the process of spiritual discernment), and in loving service to others.

³⁸ Fleming, 37.

Taoism emphasizes all things “change” for a balance of Yin and Yang in the universe. Taoists focus their minds on the vital energy to achieve harmony among human beings and also in the cosmos since all is one in relationship. Taoist meditation practices purify and train the mind to be mindful and alert in all things. This way, those who practice are acute and discerning to see reality as it is-- like the mirror that is free from illusion, bias and addiction.

Finally, Taoist practices further emphasize breathing with a quality of awareness for health in body and mind. These exercises prepare one for the stillness of the heart. They also provide relaxation to trust in Tao, in the cosmos, as well as in others, and in oneself.

This project integrates these two practices from the standpoint of Christianity. As Christians, we intend to use Taoist practice to enlarge our spiritual lives. In this sense, Taoist practice becomes an art of loving and glorifying God. Thus, when we practice Chi Kung and Tai Chi, we do so primarily to encounter God, who is the Ground of our being. Indeed, Taoist practice is a method, not a religion, and it can be used by Christians as well as by followers of any religion. Taoist practice can help us reach a deeper level of prayer, to be more open to God’s inspiration. Taoist practice becomes a gift to enhance Christian prayers. During the first century of Christianity, many monks and ascetics practiced mantras that were borrowed from other religions in India.³⁹ Moreover, it is reasonable to introduce Taoist practices to Christian prayer since many Asian Christians as well as Western Christians, have been influenced by Taoist practices.

³⁹ Yves Raguin, “Deepening Our Understanding of Spirituality,” in Spirituality in Interfaith Dialogue, eds. Tosh Arai and Wesley Ariarajah (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1989), 86.

Thus, Christians practicing Chi Kung and Tai chi can obtain six benefits for their larger spirituality, as follows.

First, Taoist practices can train the minds and the hearts of Christians to focus on God alone since God's love is faithful, enduring and unchangeable. Taoist practices constantly remind Christians that all things change because of the law of balance. Taoist practices remind Christians that life is like a flow of the river, taking the pilgrim on an always evolving spiritual journey on the way home to and with God.

The difficulty for Christians is to accept the change, to let go, to let God handle their lives. For example, my neighbor felt very upset to receive the news of his mother's death. First, he had a hard time accepting the reality of life--life comes and goes like the flow of a river--he became depressed. He felt insecure in clinging to his mother who lived temporarily on earth. In fact he felt insecure in becoming attached to anyone for his own peace and happiness. His inner impulse convinced him that God's love for him never changes (1 Cor 13), and only in God would he find peace, joy, love and hope. The more he accepted the unchangeable love of God for him, the more he found peace and harmony in God, in others and in himself. He has learned that all things evolve and change, except the love of God and that never will change. In this sense, Taoist practices can discipline the mind to focus on this God of love. In this way, Christians can appreciate that Taoist practices can train Christians' minds and hearts, to encounter God, to focus on God above all else, to give thanks and praise to God in all things.

Second, from the attitude of accepting the reality of change and of accepting the God of love, Taoist practices can purify the minds of Christians to obtain an indifferent attitude. It is needed in Christians' spiritual discernment.

Third, Taoist practices train Christians to be compassionate, sensitive, gentle and kind toward others. When practitioners sincerely practice together, the divine energy in the universe generates to them and makes them united with one another--all is one. Thus, "If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members share its joy" (1 Cor12:26).

Fourth, Taoist practices focus on the quality of breathing awareness for a healthy body and a healthy mind, in order to enrich our prayer for deepening our awareness of God's presence and love. It is helpful for Christians to have a healthy body and a healthy mind so that they can concentrate on their prayer. Ignatius did recommend rhythmical breathing in the Exercises #258-#260, but he did not explain how the breathing relates to Christian prayer. In the Taoist's point of view, proper breathing can bring order and harmony between human beings and the universe. The use of proper breathing can bring comfort and guidance for practitioners. Through Taoist breathing, one can get in touch with one's feelings and can get more in touch with one's identity--one's life. Taoist breathing can make Christians calm down and enrich them in their prayer. Johnston says that we do not only pray with the mind, but with the body and breathing, as well.⁴⁰ The Indian Jesuit, Anthony De Mello, suggested a simple way of praying with one's heart through breathing. It is better to pray with a heart without words, than with words

⁴⁰ Johnston, Mirror Mind, 23.

without a heart. One can breathe in with God's presence and breathe out with one's anxiety. One can breathe in with God's love and breathe out with one's self-hatred.⁴¹ In general, awareness of breathing in Taoist practice can lead us to be mindful that our breath comes from God. We become aware of God's presence in our breathing. Thus, when we perform our breathing with an awareness of God's presence, our breathing can be an act of adoration in our prayers.⁴²

Fifth, Taoist practices prepare a stillness of the heart for Christian prayer.

Sixth, Taoist practices can help us relax our bodies and minds so that we can be open to God, and trust in God more deeply. We can also use the different postures of Chi Kung and Tai Chi in our prayer.

Glorification of God by Ignatian and Taoist Practices

I would like to propose that the two streams can glorify God by having the attitude of "*awareness of God in all things*." To explain this concept clearly, I rely on a story of Leo Tolstoy. The story is about "The king's three questions."⁴³

The king had three questions that no one in his palace could answer. Wearing poor clothes, the king decided to see the hermit, who was living on a mountain far away from his kingdom. Four soldiers accompanied the king, and they stayed at the foot of the mountain. The king, himself, climbed up to meet the hermit. Finally, the king saw the hermit, who was old man, working in his garden. The king asked the hermit three questions:

When is the best time for us to do each thing?

Who is the most important person for us to respect and to work with?

What is the most important thing for us to do all the time?

⁴¹ De Mello, 37-39.

⁴² Johnston, Christian Zen, 79.

⁴³ Quoted in Nhat Hanh Thich, The Miracle of Mindfulness, trans. Mobi Ho (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), 69-75.

After listening to the king's questions, the hermit did not answer. The hermit just patted the king's shoulders and continued to dig. The hermit was tired from doing heavy digging in each row of his garden. Feeling compassionate of the hermit's old age, the king helped the hermit to do the digging. A few hours later, the king raised his questions again to the hermit, but the hermit did not answer. Working until the evening, the king asked the hermit if he knew the answer so that the king could go home before the sunset. However, something unexpected happened right at the time the king asked the hermit. The hermit shouted, "Look!" The hermit and the king saw a wounded man, who was holding his stomach which was gushing blood. The wounded man ran toward them and fell to the ground. The king and the hermit hurried to save this wounded person, who had a deep slash on his stomach. The king tore off his shirt to bandage the wounded man. Then the king and the hermit carried the wounded man to the hermit's tent. The king felt very tired and fell asleep right at the door of the tent. The next morning, when the king suddenly woke up, he was surprised that the wounded man looked at him with respect. Then the wounded man asked the king to forgive him since the wounded man had looked for the king wanting to kill him. Unfortunately, for the man when he climbed the mountain, the king's four soldiers recognized him, fought him and the man was wounded and defeated. The king was very happy to have a chance to make friends with his enemy, the wounded man. Before going home, the king approached the hermit and asked the same three questions. But the hermit said that the king already had the answers. To the surprise of the king, the hermit answered that the king would have been killed if he had not stayed to help the hermit and instead went down from the top of the mountain. Thus, the time for the king to stay with the hermit was important. The important person at that time was the hermit for the king to respect and to work with. Being compassionate and helping the hermit was the most important thing to do at that time. Then second scene happened: The time to help the wounded man was important. The king saved the wounded man's life. The most important person at that time was the wounded man, and the most important thing to do at that time was to rescue him.

Following the king's three questions, three points are necessary for Christians to live and practice. First, the present moment is the most important time because it is the only time we can control and act in, since we never know what unexpected things will happen. The Christian's point of view is to follow God's will here and now in the present moment.

Second, we should respect everyone because each human is an image of God. Each is equal in dignity, whether rich or poor, honored or dishonored, beautiful or ugly. We need to learn how to co-operate with others since we are one body of Christ (1Cor 12).

Third, loving service to others is the most important act. We need to do loving service all the time as a way we show our love for God. Most especially, we need to offer that loving service to those who live with us in daily life. The challenge for us is to accept them as they are, to get along with our neighbors who have good and bad points. Many times, we see only the bad points and fail to see the good points of others.

Summary

In general Christians need to be aware that the present moment is the most important time. They need to be aware that everyone, made in the image of God, has a right to be respected; and to be aware that loving service to others is the most important act that Christians need to do all the time. A way to help Christians to live and practice these three points is to practice "*Awareness of God in all things.*" Ignatian prayer practices highlight the idea of finding God in all things and Taoist meditation practices highlight the awareness of all things. Thus, "awareness of God in all things" is an integration of Ignatius prayer practices and Taoist meditation practices, pointing toward God. We can become more mindful of God's love for us. In turn we can respond to God's love more effectively. "Awareness of God in all things" is a way to glorify God in all ordinary things such as sitting, standing and eating and most especially in prayer,

spiritual discernment and loving service to others. I will explain how this model can be useful for Christians for a holistic well-being of spirituality in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

Models for Awareness of God in All Things

Once you know all these things, bless will you be if you put them into practice. (John 13:17)

I have named the model for Ignatian prayer practices and Taoist practices complimenting each other for the greater glory of God, “Awareness of God in All Things.”¹ AGIAT is an incorporation of Christian prayer and Taoist meditation. The main function of AGIAT is to love God and glorify God in all things. AGIAT is an art of Christian living in relationship with God whom we desire to praise and glorify. However, I realize that AGIAT is, but one way to God; it is not the only way to love God. With this attitude in mind, I would like to provide three models for nurturing AGIAT through an integration of Ignatian and Taoist practices. AGIAT can be used with individuals; it can be used in a Christian Tai Chi meditation class; and it can be used in a one-day retreat setting.

Awareness of God in All Things for an Individual²

With the attitude of AGIAT, I intend to help a Christian to fix one’s mind and heart on God, moment to moment. I intend to assist Christians as well as myself to be aware of God’s presence and love in all things, to see things differently for the greater glory of God. Thus, in daily living, I can be aware of God in all things through my prayer, discernment of spirits and loving service.³

¹ I refer to “Awareness of God in All Things” as AGIAT.

² “I” is used to express my experience as well as that of an individual who follows this model.

³ Everyone needs a spiritual director for one’s spiritual growth, normally meeting once each month. Especially, one needs a spiritual director for one’s discernment of spirits. Since discernment of

As I discussed in chapter two, daily awareness of God's presence in all things can be cultivated through ordinary experience, mantra, examen of consciousness, personal prayer and Eucharist. First, being aware of God in ordinary experience is useful for my spiritual life since I have to deal with ordinary things every day. At anytime, I can raise my mind and heart to God. As I train myself to see God in all things, the horizon of divine awareness recedes, and my consciousness of God increases. I can be aware of God's love and providence in ordinary things such as eating, lying down, taking a bath and breathing. Second, repeating mantric prayer can keep my mind focused on God alone--to be aware of God's presence moment to moment. While waiting in line or by the phone I can practice repeating a mantra. I can fill my mind with God from the waking time until I go to bed at night by using mantric prayer. Some mantric prayers are "Praise to You, Lord Jesus!"; "Be still! Know that I am God" (Ps 46:10); "I came that they may have life" (Jn 10:10); "Come! Lord Jesus," "You are precious in my eyes" (Is 43:5), "Your love is better than life" (Ps 63). Third, in Examen of Consciousness the primary concern is how God is affecting and moving me and how I respond to God. It helps me to seek God in all things, connecting moment to moment. Finally, in Eucharist God's son offers himself for me. Through Jesus, in Jesus and with Jesus I have power to do everything for praise and glorification of God in all things.

Awareness of God in My Personal Prayer

Awareness of God in my personal prayer is where an integration of Ignatian prayer and Taoist meditation can easily take place. My personal prayer is about twenty minutes

spirits is a very complicated issue, without the help of the Spirit of God and the spiritual director, one has difficulty listening to God's will.

to sixty minutes. I suggest three elements for an effective prayer of awareness of God in all things. Trusting in the Lord is first, as I can trust in the Spirit of God to lead me freely, without thinking of solutions. Second, slowing down all of my actions is the fundamental step to silence of the heart. To calm down my spirit, I spend five minutes in practicing Chi Kung or Tai Chi. The third and final element is the silence of the heart which is the key to listening to God attentively.

The choice of prayer form is an individual matter, and different prayer forms are like different personal tastes. In fact, I can alternate different prayer forms in order to avoid boredom and dryness in my prayer time. So I might choose the form that most moves me to love God and to glorify God with my whole heart and mind. Some of the different types of prayer are scripture prayer or Ignatian contemplation of scripture, or Centering prayer as mentioned.

Since prayer is to allow my mind and heart to unite with God, to praise God, to glorify God in the present moment, I also can use “praying with Chi Kung” form, or “praying with Tai Chi” form, or “praying with praise and thanks” form, or “praying with hymns” form, or a “combination between scripture and mantra” form, or “questioning and listening to God” form. Here, I explain each of them in detail.

First, for the “praying with Chi Kung” form, I can use the breathing awareness of God’s presence in Chi Kung when I sit or stand or walk, since I believe the Spirit of God is present in me through my breath. Thus, I can pray in Chi Kung, not just with the mind, but with the heart, through breathing. I breathe in with a deep yearning for God, and I

breathe out with a belief that God heals me. God purifies me of all of my anxiety and worries.

Second, a Christian can also use “praying with Tai Chi” form. In every movement I can be aware of God’s presence. I can enjoy dancing with God in every movement of the exercise.

Third, a Christian can use the “praying by praise and thanks” form. For example, when I behold nature, trees, and flowers, my mind and heart desire to praise and thank God for the beauty and goodness of God. I also can meditate on each gift that God has given to me and give thanks and praise to God in the flow of thanksgiving.

Fourth, a Christian can also use “praying with hymns.” It is similar to the method of the “Scripture Prayer” in chapter 2. Hymns often appeal to many who use this form.

Fifth, I can also use a “combination of scripture and mantra” prayer form. I read a passage of scripture for five minutes, then I offer my heart to God to listen. Meanwhile, I can use a mantra repeatedly with a loving heart, such as “Come! Lord Jesus,” or “Praise to You, Lord Jesus.”

Sixth, a Christian can use the “questioning and listening prayer” form. I can raise questions and concerns to God. Then I spend time to listen to God’s voice. The following are examples of such questioning and listening.

With the question, “How has God loved me?,” I can read one of the following scriptures: Rev 3:20, 1 Jn 4:10, Jn 3:16, Is 43:1-4. Then I can raise some questions such

as “What has happened to me each year since my childhood?” “How did God love me?” Then I express my feelings to God.⁴

With the question, “What is my deepest desire?” I can raise some questions: What shape is my life taking? What is in me that needs to be emptied so that God can fill my heart? What is my deepest desire? What do I really want for myself, God? Have I any desires which cannot be fulfilled? What are they? Do I want to be someone that I cannot be? Are my ideals unrealistic? Do they make very severe demands on me?

With the question, “Am I focusing on Jesus Christ?” (Exercise #53), Ignatius recommends raising three questions: first, what have I done for Jesus Christ? Second, what am I doing for Christ? Third, what ought I to do for Christ?

Finally, I have some suggestions for personal prayer. First, if I feel tired, I should not pray because I might fall asleep. It is better to take a nap or to rest for a while, then to pray. Second, I should not pray when I am very hungry or very full. Third, it is difficult for me to pray if I feel too cold or too hot. Fourth, if praying in a sitting position makes me feel sleepy, then I should stand up to avoid falling asleep. If praying while taking a walk makes me feel distracted, then I should walk slowly or stand in one location where I feel comfortable. Fifth, it is better to develop a good habit of my personal prayer by having a regular time and place to pray daily.

Awareness of God in My Act of Love

Since our acts of love and holiness toward others is evidence of our love for God (Mt 25:45), our serving of others is our serving God. Being gentle and kind to others is

⁴ It is not necessary that Christians must feel thankful to God. For example, they should express their anger to God, since getting in touch with and expressing their authentic feelings promote a healthy relationship with God.

being gentle and kind to God. First, I try to see good things in others in order to encourage them. Second, I try to have a good habit of smiling, since smiling brings happiness to others as well as to myself. Smiling makes me and others feel relaxed. In daily life, I can practice a good habit of touching my lips lightly for a smile. I also develop my sense of humor, or even sing a happy song to show the glory of God, to believe that the God/man, Jesus, overcomes the evildoers.

Finally, I can use my interests and talents for the best service to others, in teaching them the benefits of Western and Eastern meditations. When I enjoy what I am doing, it is beneficial for me as well as for others. In this sense, to develop my talents is to do God's will. God's will for me is peace and happiness. Happiness comes when I seek to please God rather than depend on the approval of other people for honor. Thus, the longer I live, the more I need to improve my talents and interests for the well-being of humanity.

Awareness of God in Christian Tai Chi Meditation Class

The second way to embody this project is to create a Christian Tai Chi Meditation class. This class is for those who are interested and perseverant in weekly practice. They also need to listen to and question their instructor for their improvement. Usually, they are adults, males and females.

Teaching this kind of class, I intend to help my students sharpen their minds and hearts for God, to love and glorify God with their whole being. I also expect my students to gain good health from Christian Tai Chi meditation class. In this class, they can learn to quiet their minds and to be aware of everything more effectively in their daily living. I

intend to invite many people to come to practice together for supporting one another--emotionally, spiritually and physically.⁵

I intend to build a bridge that connects the two streams, Ignatian prayer practices and Taoist practices, to help both Eastern and Western people come to know one another, to love and to help one another for the holistic well-being of humanity. A Christian Tai Chi Meditation class can help them to be whole, to be complete in body, mind and spirit. It can help them to be alive with an awareness of God's love for them, and to respond to God effectively.

The location of the retreat is very important. A room should have following conditions: First, it should be large enough for Chi Kung and Tai Chi movements. Second, it should be quiet so that there is no distracting noise. Third, the room should not be too hot or cold. Fourth, it should have fresh air, a restroom, chairs and a blackboard to teach with.

The model I have used for Christian Tai Chi Meditation class is that practitioners should meet twice a week, for sixty to ninety minutes. The general schedule for sixty minutes should be the following:⁶

First, twenty minutes practicing Chi Kung. Practitioners can practice one of a variety of techniques as following:

-Awareness walking, sitting, standing.

⁵ The best way to learn Chi Kung and Tai Chi is to have an instructor. One can have Taoist practice in Los Angeles or in San Francisco. However, one can also learn from Chi Kung and Tai Chi video tapes advertised in any T'ai Chi magazine. The best way to learn Ignatian prayer is to have a retreat guided by Jesuit members who have retreat houses in many states.

⁶ Meditation music is recommended. However, members of the class should decide this together.

- Breathing with awareness of each breath.
- Breathing with awareness of counting from one to ten.
- Breathing with a mantra
- Breathing with awareness of God's presence

Second, practitioners can spend five minutes massaging the whole body for good circulation. After practicing Chi Kung, they should use their hands to rub the face, neck, chest, stomach, feet and the back in order to stimulate the Chi flow to all parts of the body for a healthy body and a healthy mind.

Third, practitioners can spend fifteen minutes for prayer. The class can pray for one another's needs, for healing and for nurturing Christians' loving service to others. Finally, practitioners can deepen their desire to serve God through others by using some types of prayer like "praying with hymns" and "Examen of consciousness."

Fourth, twenty minutes practicing Tai Chi. Practitioners can practice three forms of Tai Chi, the Yang style, as mentioned in chapter three.

Basically, every movement should be done slowly and comfortably with ease, so that practitioners can be aware and enjoy every move, every breath as a gift of God, in order to praise God.

Awareness of God in a Silent Retreat

A third way to embody this project's concern is to nurture awareness of God in all things in a silent retreat. According to Ignatius, the silent retreat requires the retreatant to be alone with God, and to be silent so that one can communicate with God effectively.

The scriptures emphasize “Be still and know that I am God” (Ps 46:10). Thus, we must quiet our conscious minds to listen to God attentively.

In this one day silent retreat, I intend to help Christian Tai Chi practitioners in having a good rest and relaxing in God’s love and care—a short vacation with God. Thus, in this silent retreat the practitioners can get away from their daily stress and worry. Especially, I intend to challenge my students to discern in their lives; whether they are doing God’s will or their own things, and to discern their ultimate life goal.

This one day silent retreat is an integration of Ignatian prayer practices and Taoist practices. It is a silent retreat so the retreatants should not talk to each other. One also should not watch TV or read a newspaper or cook a meal. For a silent retreat, the basic question to be raised is, “How can I relax, eat, and pray well?” This kind of silent retreat can be offered once a month in order to help retreatants to relax, to have a vacation with God; especially, to refocus their goal on God by being aware of God in all things.

Retreatants should be selected for this silent retreat. They must be at least eighteen years old or at a college level. They should know how to pray; or at least they should be interested in prayer. They should also know at least a little of Chi Kung and Tai Chi.

A Plan for One Day of Silent Retreat

For preparation, there are nine steps to follow. First, the director needs to choose a theme. For example, “Awareness of God in All Things.” Second, the director invites members to form a committee for planning a one day silent retreat. Third, the committee needs to plan in advance and to make an announcement. Fourth, a schedule for one day of

silent retreat should contain one hour for Chi Kung and Tai Chi, two hours for personal prayers (each period is about one hour), one and a half-hours for lunch and rest, fifteen minutes for feedback and one hour for Eucharist with faith sharing.

Fifth, the committee needs to reserve a room which is big enough for Chi Kung and Tai Chi movement.⁷ Sixth, the committee needs to make available Bibles, papers, pens, and cushions or pillows. Seventh, either the committee prepares lunch or retreatants bring their own.

Eighth, the committee needs to prepare an evaluation form. The evaluation form is designed to find out what the retreatants will do with their faith after making a silent retreat, and to solicit retreatants' suggestions of possible improvements for the next retreat. The format evaluation sample can be passed out to invite evaluation both of the director and the retreat day, as follows: What have you liked most? What excites you about this day of retreat? What impression has the retreat day made on you? What have you disliked most? How has the retreat affected your overall life? Choices made? New directions? Prayer life? What are your suggestions to improve this kind of retreat?

Ninth, to conclude the silent retreat, the committee can plan for the Eucharist liturgy with a theme and "faith sharing" among the retreatants.⁸

⁷ The conditions of a room are similar to a room for a class in Christian Tai Chi meditation.

⁸ "Faith sharing" is a time to listen to one another with a grateful attitude. It is not a time for discussion. Everyone has a chance to share, but no one is forced.

A Retreat Schedule

One silent day of retreat can be scheduled as follows.

Theme: "Awareness of God in All Things"

Scripture: Mt 6:25-34 and Mt 6:9-13

- (15 minutes) 10 a.m.-10:15 a.m.: Prayer/music/ orientation
- (30 minutes) 10:15 a.m.-10:45 a.m.: Chi Kung practice
- (15 minutes) 10:45 a.m.-11:00 a.m.: Point #1: "Be on guard" (Mk 13:33, Mk 14:38)
- (60 minutes) 11:05 a.m.-12:05 p.m.: Personal prayer #1
- (30 minutes) 12:10 p.m.- 12:40 p.m.: Reflection after prayer⁹
- (90 minutes) 12:40 p.m.- 2:10 p.m.: LUNCH AND RELAXATION¹⁰
- (30 minutes) 2:15 p.m.- 2:45 p.m.: Tai Chi practice
- (15 minutes) 2:45 p.m.- 3:00 p.m.: Point #2: "Stay awake" (Mk 13:33, Mk 14:38,
& (1 Thes 5: 2, 6)
- (60 minutes) 3:05 p.m.- 4:05 p.m.: Personal prayer #2
- (30 minutes) 4:10 p.m.- 4:40 p.m.: Reflection after prayer
- (15 minutes) 4:45 p.m.- 5:00 p.m.: Evaluation
- (60 minutes) 5:00 p.m.- 6:00 p.m.: Eucharist liturgy with the theme "Awareness of God in
All Things,"¹¹ including the faith sharing and praying together.

⁹ Questions for reflection after prayer can be found in Chap. 2.

¹⁰ Retreatants should have a light lunch so that they can practice Tai Chi and pray better in the afternoon.

¹¹ Music can be played effectively. For example, "How Great Thou Art" by Stuart K. Hine or "Holy God We Praise Thy Name" at 10:00 a.m- 10:15 a.m., meditation music or soft music at lunch time and "Amazing Grace" by New Britain at Eucharist liturgy time.

Evaluation of One Day of Silent Retreat

On November 13, 1994, I conducted a one day silent retreat at the School of Theology at Claremont.¹² To prepare for this retreat, I had as a theme “how Ignatian prayer and Taoist practice enlarge my spirituality.” I and two students planned this retreat. We announced the retreat to my Tai Chi students one month before the actual date, and we reserved the Davis lounge room. We prepared an evaluation for feedback with two questions: How have Ignatian prayer and Taoist practice been effective in your feelings? How do the two streams compliment each other for your spiritual growth?

This retreat was conducted with six female students and one male student attending. We began at ten o’clock and finished eight hours later. Unexpectedly we had to leave the Davis lounge at three o’clock since there was another group coming to use the room. At this point, we prayed and performed Taoist practices at the Davis lawn area. We had to move from one location to the next; we did not feel comfortable staying in one place because of the cold weather. Finally, we shared our retreat experience and prayed for one another.

Seven people attended, but only six of them expressed their feelings which I summarize as following:

Person #1 felt calm and saw things differently than during a routine day. For example, this person saw that animals and trees were more beautiful than busy daily life. This person also felt God was near with the feeling of need to belong to God, to trust in God more.

¹² The texts of their evaluations can be found in the Appendix.

Person #2 found that practicing Tai Chi helped her to be more aware and calmer. In her prayer, she discovered that she often used her mind to take control. Consequently, she felt confused and heavy.

Person #3 also found the Taoist practices helped her peace and happiness so that she wanted to reach out to others with her love. She felt comfortable with quiet time and she felt God's presence in nature.

Person #4 felt that Taoist practices helped him to trust in God. He felt more valuable and lovable since he was aware of God's love for him. He also felt more aware of the stress and tension in his body.

Person #5 felt more aware of his breathing during the day. Tai Chi helped him to let go of negative thoughts. Tai Chi helped him to relax and feel light and positive about himself. Finally, in his prayer, he felt Jesus Christ was with him on his journey. He did not feel that he had to struggle alone.

Person #6 practiced Chi Kung and Tai Chi. She was aware of her physical pain and emotional pain. In prayer, she felt relaxed, warm and safe since she felt God was with her.

These retreatants shared that they had found God in their prayer, as well as in practicing Chi Kung and Tai Chi. They enlarged their spirituality with awareness of God's presence. They saw things differently than during their ordinary routine. They saw flowers and animals more alive and beautiful. They also observed that with the cold weather it was difficult for them to pray outside. It was difficult for them to pray after lunch, since they became sleepy. They lost time moving from one place to another for their reflection

after praying. They felt the need to learn more about how to talk to God with their authentic feelings. Finally, there was one person who came late. Her late appearance distracted the other members of the group.

In light of these remarks, I offer the following suggestions for modifying this silent retreat. First, I should allow extra time to move from one activity to the next since activities often run over the schedule time. Second, I need to emphasize silence in this kind of retreat so that each retreatant can gain the best benefit in awareness of God in all things. Third, I also should prepare more meditation music, and fourth, always be available in the dining room for those who are interested in listening to God's voice in this special way. Finally, the room should be warm in the winter. If it is possible each retreatant should have a private room so that one can rest and pray more effectively after lunch.

Conclusion

Awareness of God's presence in all things is a challenge, but it is very practical and enjoyable. It is prayer since prayer is to allow one's mind and heart to unite with God in the present moment. In this sense, training one's mind to focus on God all the time is necessary. Taoist training can help one's mind to make this wonderful prayer.

We can practice "Awareness of God in all things" for the greater glory of God through Ignatian and Taoist practices. First, we can be aware of God's presence in our minds and hearts anytime, especially in our breathing, in mantric prayer and in ordinary experience. Second, we can be aware of God's presence in our acts of love and holiness in two significant ways. First, we encourage others by praise, and we can give a sincere

smile to everyone. We need to be a channel of God's love for the world. We love others as Jesus has loved us. "Your attitude must be that of Christ: Though he was in the form of God, he did not deem equality with God something to be grasped at. Rather, he emptied himself and took the form of a slave, being born in the likeness of men" (Phil 2: 5-7). Thus, we need to be a river of love, flowing to and for everyone so that they can experience our generous deeds in order to praise God. Second, we always need to be alert in order to remind ourselves that we are beloved children of God. We need to be aware at all times of the God of love for whom we live, in loving service in all things, for the greater glory of God.

Appendix

Narratives of Participants

Participants wrote narratives describing the impact of each element of the Taoist/Ignatian prayers upon them personally; the ways in which they perceive the two sides of the spiritual process complimenting each other, and enlarging the whole spiritual experience:

PERSON # 1

Today I am experiencing my body to be very peaceful and relaxed. During the Chi Kung I felt comfortably warm, I felt the cool air enter my nostrils and go down into my lungs. It was a calming experience. After ten minutes of sitting, I stood. While standing I felt my body swaying back and forth, until I remembered to sink down into the ground. Then I felt much more stable.

During the thirty minute prayer time, I walked around the campus, crossing through the shadows and sunlight. The shadows felt especially cool, but the warmth of the sun felt calming to me. I began to reflect upon the image of God as light and how warm and peaceful that made me feel. I noticed that I walked more quickly through the shade than through the sunlight. In the sunlight I became very still; enough to notice how beautiful were the many colors of leaves on the trees, to listen to the movements of many forms of life in the vines and shrubs around campus. When I reached the East side of the campus, I beheld the mountains. They are beautiful with snow upon the center peak. Mountains symbolize stability and longevity to me. Surely they know, through their years of stillness, the magnificence of God and how God has moved through this place. Then the Scripture came to mind where Jesus said if we only have faith the size of a mustard seed, we could say "move" to the mountain and it would move. That is a lot of power in such a small amount of faith.

On my way back to the meeting room, I passed by many birds gathering seeds and nuts for their nests. I heard their many voices, calling and responding to one another. I was very pleased that they did not seem afraid of me. I knew this was because of the inner calmness which I was experiencing and the resulting calmness of my walking. One little brown bird was on the ground a few steps in front of me, and simply stepped a few steps to the side rather than flying away, as I approached. I noticed how lightly I felt on my feet, and wondered if this was how God prevented the Israelites shoes/sandals from wearing out those forty years in the wilderness. I became aware of many sights and sounds which I take for granted everyday. I see these same trees everyday and yet I have not seen them.

This is the gift of Tai Chi and Chi Kung for me. It allows me to slow down and take notice of things which I miss everyday. I experience the beauty and variety of God's creation, and do not feel alienated in it. This notion of prayer in motion allows me to experience God in modes other than my mind. I can feel God in the warmth of the sun, I can see God in the beauty of nature, I can smell God in the scents of the leaves, and hear God's voice among the birds singing.

As a teenager, I had a special place in the woods that I would go to and meet God. When I moved away from home it seemed that I had lost touch with God, because I no longer had a sacred place to meet God (Church has rarely been such a place for me). Today's experience has shown me that every place can be a sacred space for talking with God. God is as close as the nose on my face; I just have to prepare myself to experience God wherever I am.

As an African American, I come from a long cultural tradition of oral prayers. When people gather together, they pray in very natural, unrehearsed, but powerful ways. Those passionate prayers free the soul of its pain and anguish. Much to my dismay, I have felt alienated from that prayerful tradition due to some bad experiences in my early life. I came to believe that Jesus does not always listen to prayers or save us from our troubles. I looked for other ways to find peace, which worked for a while. But in the past year, I have found these other means to be wholly inadequate. I have lived and depended too much on my mind, my thinking. This is no longer enough. I need to depend on God and God's grace to allow me to more fully experience life.

The combination of Chi Kung and prayer has helped me realize this, and to begin to open myself up to experiencing God beyond my mind. It helps me to be aware of my body, and especially of my feelings. It prevents me from blocking out parts of the world, parts of my experiences. I now have a greater experience to draw from. It also has made me realize in how many different ways God loves me and has been with me all along, even though I did not realize God was there. I remember the scripture, "I stand at the door and knock, if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with them."

PERSON #2

Chi Kung

It is a tool that is always there for me to be able to rebalance my awareness of my connection to God. Retreats like this are a good "education"--a chance to clarify and practice skills. But the real value of Chi Kung, I think, is its availability to me throughout the day--in the middle of all aspects of my life--using it helps me realize that all parts of life are connected to each other.

Tai Chi

Even after only the first movement my heart was beating faster--like when I run, but not that powerful. I see the value of Chi Kung and Tai Chi for my health: the two are like two sides of the same coin. Both help expand my awareness of being human and make me better. I am more alert, but calm when I do both. I am active (do more, get more done) but not pressured and not in a hurry. The combination is "exhilarating" and peaceful at the same time.

Ignatian Methods

I had not used the Bible much in this context (not at all). I think I used it for meditation but some how "used my brain about it" too much. Using Old Testament, but especially the New Testament now will be different for me. More powerful. More real value in growing in awareness and connection to God--when combined with Chi Kung and Tai Chi.

I guess that is all there is in life, eh? Thanks.

PERSON # 3

The practices and prayers have enabled me to become aware of God's presence. It is difficult to make time for important things in life. Taoist practices and Ignatian prayers have allowed me to set priorities. God is the most important one in my life but I did not always allow this to be true. The practices and prayers in our groups have awakened a spiritual bond. With all elements in the presence of our Lord. An awareness that completes the void that one could possibly experience.

The experiences are peaceful, satisfying and fulfilling in all aspects. It is hard to separate one from the other. I mean not to offend or insult anyone but it reminds of the Blessed Trinity. I feel like my life is full of love, that I can overcome any feelings of discontent with any enemies I may encounter.

I also feel that my attitude is different, that I accept all that our Lord sends me, bad or good. Although it is very difficult at times, to meet for Chi Kung and Tai Chi, I look forward to the practices. After the practices, I feel at peace, happy, and motivated to serve God. I want to greet and smile at everyone in the Lord's name.

The two traditions compliment each other because our body needs exercises, which is a physical aspect nurturance, and our soul needs spiritual nurturance also. Prayer and practice bring these two traditions together to better understand. Our purpose in life--spiritually, meaningfully, and successfully--is to meet our Maker, our God of love.

When I meditate I feel very emotional; I feel the presence of our Lord and full of love! When I exercise I feel it is a graceful symphony in thanksgiving.

Tai Chi exercises are very challenging but persistence will make perfect and reward efforts.

The passage about the blind man [Mk10:46-52] was very important to me today. As it was being reread it gave me the feeling that I should always ask our Lord to help me see the things that I am supposed to be doing for him. That I was placed on this earth for a purpose and should constantly be aware of it.

The quiet time praying and meditating was wonderful! As I glanced at a tree it reminded me of God being the trunk of the tree who gives us everlasting life. The branches reminded me of us, his children, who should be changing, like the leaves, as we grow spiritually.

As I approached the front of the buildings [of STC] I was reminded of the uncaring, us, with the hustle and bustle of life and its noise. When I walked in the shade I felt the cold and indifference that we at times experience due to our busy world. As I stepped into a sunny area I felt like God is the immense being enfolding us in his warm and everlasting love for us. The trees, the flowers, the insects, the sky, the noises, the beautiful sounds, the peacefulness, the manmade environment, all made me realize what a minute being I am. I also realize that together all of us can help ourselves by prayer and love for an everlasting life with our Lord.

It was a wonderful afternoon. Thanks be to God.

PERSON #4

Taoist practices and Ignatian prayers model have helped me to be focused and relax and also to be quiet so Jesus can come into my life and also gives me a chance to listen to him. It has helped me to let go of negativity in my life and again it has helped me to continue trusting in God and to be patient.

Taoist practices have helped me to be strong and maybe stronger and more in-tune and aware of my body and its workings. It has made me aware so that I will not keep on abusing it. It has helped me to respect it.

The Ignatian prayers have taught me that Jesus loves us but we have to let him in. Jesus has given a choice, he will not impose himself on us. We need to let him into our lives, we have to invite him. Sometimes we let our lives be so busy we do not let him in or do not hear him knock. With the Ignatian prayers, I have learned to be quiet and again let go and let God take over. Yes, they [the two traditions] have enlarged my spiritual experience for me immensely. By focusing on how God loves me has helped me to feel more valuable, more lovable in my own eyes. To know that God loves me unconditionally has helped me to trust myself more and to count my blessing in the many ways and times he has helped me through all the crises in my life. All I have to do is to trust and let go and I know God is present and will help me.

PERSON #5

My experience of Chi Kung meditation has helped me be more aware of being relaxed in my day-to-day living. I am aware more of when I get tense. I am more aware of my breathing during the day. I have learned to think of breathing in my navel. I have practiced other methods of deep breathing exercises in the past which focused on relaxing the chest area and mental imagining. I have been practicing Chi Kung and Tai Chi for about five months. I practice once or twice a week in the group and once or twice or three times a week at home. I generally spend about thirty minutes practicing the breathing and Tai Chi form at home.

I feel Chi Kung and Tai Chi help me relax and feel more energy in my daily living. Many times after meditating in the morning I seem to be able to accomplish many activities during the day.

I am generally a tense and worried person. I feel Tai Chi can help me relax more and calm myself more in daily living. When first starting to practice Tai Chi, I felt uncomfortable at time sitting still for fifteen or twenty minutes at a time. With more practice, the meditation became easier to do. I had a lot of trouble with negative thoughts while meditating in the beginning. Gradually, the negative thoughts decreased. I practiced better in letting go of negative thoughts and thinking more of breathing in my navel.

I feel Tai Chi and Chi Kung meditation can help me prepare myself to pray better. I can open myself to God's messages to me by being relaxed. Tai Chi helps me feel more relaxed and more comfortable during the day. It can help me as a preparation for reading Scripture and then listening to God in quiet prayer.

I have experienced many times that when I feel a little tired or depressed that the Tai Chi meditation and exercises help lift my spirits and help me to feel more positive about myself and my problems. I feel Tai Chi practice can be an antidote in my life for obsessive thinking.

Since practicing Tai Chi I am more aware of how my body feels. I am more conscious during the day whether I am relaxed or feeling tense. Sometimes after practicing Tai Chi I have a feeling of lightness in my body and in my breathing. I am more aware of my breathing throughout the day when I practice meditation and Tai Chi.

Afternoon: the Tai Chi exercises helped me to feel more calm and relaxed and peaceful. This happens to me without my own effort. It seems when I am doing the exercise that nothing is happening. However, when I was finished, I felt more calm and relaxed.

Then during the reflection period (Ignatian prayers), I had the feeling that I am not in my journey in life alone. Jesus will help me and is with me. I am married, and so I have

a companion to share my journey at this time. But ultimately I am on the journey by myself with God's help. It is a feeling of stark reality, of discomfort. What is ahead will be new and not yet experienced and will change in God's time if I cooperate with him.

PERSON #6

For me, both Taoist practices and Ignatian prayers are equally important elements for receiving God's guidance in my life. I think of my time spent doing Tai Chi and Chi Kung as my "receptive or listening mode" in which I let the spirit of God flow through me. Sometimes during these periods of practice, I notice certain areas of physical pain or emotions rising to the surface. I take consciousness of these areas to be signs from God guiding me to look closer at those areas. Especially during Chi Kung practice, I often try to guide my awareness and my energy to those areas of pain or sadness. Often, with my awareness there, I become conscious of certain pictures in my mind's eye-memories, people, emotions, words, colors. Once I have accumulated a number of these pictures, I change my form of prayer from what I consider the more receptive Eastern mode, to what I think of as the more active Western mode. Now I am no longer praying just for information, but for understanding of God's information for me. To me this is a more intellectual, thoughtful process, in which I review the pictures and emotions that have been brought to my consciousness in order to look for patterns and understanding. Often, after spending time looking at the pictures regarding some specific area of trouble in my life, I am able to see the situation more clearly, and I understand better what my role in the matter is (i.e., what actions I may take, and the possible consequences those actions may have). I know I have understood God's message for me when I once again reach a state of peace in my mind. In this state, no pictures, words or emotions come to me; I just feel relaxed, warm and safe. Time is not important. It is in these moments that I feel one with God; I know that God is loving me, and I am secure that God is leading me in a safe path as long as I search for that sense of peace.

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